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WITH A SHOW

THROUGH

SOUTHERN AFRICA.

Leaving Natal for the Transvaal.

Frontispiece to Vol. II.

WITH A SHOW

THROUGH

SOUTHERN AFRICA,

AND

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF THE TRANSVAAL WAR.

BY

CHARLES DU VAL,

LATE OF THE CARBINEERS, ATTACHÉ TO THE STAFF OF GARRISON COMMANDANT, AND EDITOR OF THE 'NEWS OF THE CAMP' DURING THE INVESTMENT OF PRETORIA.

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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A SHOW THROUGH SOUTHERN AFRICA.

CHAPTER I.

FORTIFICATION AND 'SENTRY GO'—A RECONNAISSANCE BY NIGHT—ARRIVAL OF MESSENGERS FROM THE HONDE RIVER—DISASTER TO THE 94TH REGIMENT—DECLARATION OF MARTIAL LAW—SCHEME OF DEFENCE—REMOVAL TO CAMP—A MERRY (!) CHRISTMAS.

THE work of loopholing and fortifying went bravely on, and natives, wherever found, were pressed into the service. Whilst walking down one of the principal streets, I saw a German, armed with an assegai, penning a dozen Kaffirs into a little backyard, they being evidently desirous to 'clear out,' disliking the snuff of battle in the air. He most generously transferred his assegai and duty to me, saying he would be back in a couple of shakes, and before I had time to expostulate he was gone. I suppose no other dozen of men desirous of their freedom would have quietly submitted to the dictation of a unit of the human race, even though armed with a Zulu javelin; but there they huddled and laughed, and seemed to look upon it as a huge joke, except one fellow who was afterwards pointed out as a

'missionary Kaffir,' and he seemed inclined to argue the point, and required the assegai shaken at him, supported by a fund of adjurations which it were as well to express by sundry blanks. I was not sorry to see my Teuton acquaintance returning, which he did after a short absence, accompanied by a number of Zulu constables, who drove off the baker's dozen of sand-bag carriers to join their fellows in the work of rendering Pretoria a sufficiently stiff nut to dislocate the jaws of even the Transvaal Boers, when in due course they essayed to crack it. Sentinels were placed through the streets, and waggons drawn across all the thoroughfares, and 'under arms all night' was the hint given to all such as had received rifles and ammunition. The challenges of the amateur soldiers posted through the town became positively ludicrous from their repetition; in fact every dozen yards, the eternal 'Who goes there?' was to be met with, and the sentries apparently enjoyed their new responsibility, and swelled out in self-satisfied military complacency as they challenged and re-challenged all the evening.

Riding in to the market square with half a dozen comrades of the Pretoria 'Carabineers,' I was challenged by one of these irrepressible gentlemen, and replying 'Friend,' was asked to 'advance one and give the countersign.' Impelled by a spirit of humour, I cantered up and said *sotto voce:*

'Good heavens, man, what a fool you are! don't you know it's the commanding officer "on grand rounds"?'

The sentry's legs immediately formed the letter X, and the rattle created by his knees knocking together

would have created envy in the soul of a corner-man of a negro minstrel troupe.

'What shall I do?' he replied, in a wavering voice.

'Why, present arms,' said I, which he did; and rejoining my party, we rode past, receiving the honours of commanding officers, and with difficulty restraining the general guffaw that was rising in our throats.

Nothing having been heard for some time from the head-quarters column of the 94th Regiment, which, under the command of Colonel Anstruther, was hourly expected in Pretoria from Lydenburg, it was decided to feel for them, and a reconnaissance by all the mounted men who could be spared was consequently arranged for the night of the 20th December. As usual the 'Carabineers' were well to the front, and the column had proceeded a considerable distance from Pretoria when information was received that an outlying picquet near the town had stopped two men on foot carrying information from the expected regiment, who had been surprised and defeated at a place some forty miles from Pretoria.

Our horses' heads were immediately turned to town, and at six o'clock in the morning, after stabling my beast, I went to the European Hotel, and there had an interview with Mr. Egerton, one of the two envoys who had brought in the news of the disaster. Mr. Egerton was serving in the Transport Department, and I heard from his own lips a tolerably succinct description of what had transpired. A shapely, well-looking man, whom no one could mistake for anything but a gentleman, he showed me how the weary tramp of forty miles

had told upon his feet, which, blistered and in many places absolutely raw, evidenced more than words could possibly do, the endurance that had been exhibited by their possessor in his eleven hours' march through the previous day and part of the night. He was cool and pleasant in his manner, and said that they (the Boers) managed it beautifully, and had stopped the column near the river, and incapacitated all the officers and most of the non-commissioned ones at the first two or three volleys; that Colonel Anstruther was wounded in five or six places, and seeing the futility of further resistance, he had given the men the order to surrender, after the engagement had lasted some twenty minutes, and more than half the regiment were killed or wounded; that he (Egerton) had obtained permission to go in to Pretoria for medical assistance, and before leaving had managed to fasten the colours of the regiment round his body, and had placed them in the hands of Captain Campbell, the senior captain of the 94th, who with eighty of his men was occupying Fort Royal at Pretoria. These colours I afterwards learned were handed to Lieutenant-Colonel Gildea for safe keeping, and he, with a touch of chivalry in his action, had them wound inside those of his own regiment—the Royal Scots Fusiliers—as a guarantee that the safety of the colours his comrades-in-arms had placed within his care should be that of his own. An amusing incident came to light afterwards, as stated by some of the survivors of the 94th, to the effect that the Boers, being naturally anxious to secure the colours of the regiment, made searches and inquiries for them, receiving a

couple of banners which had been used for decorative purposes in connection with garrison balls, theatricals, etc., and which were carried into Heidelberg by the victors as trophies of the fray, and will probably be kept as mementoes by the Piet, or Gert, or Dirk who secured them, to recall the famous day when the 'Honde Ravier' gurgled along, with the 'rooi baatjes' (red-jackets) shot, torn, and mangled within sight of its fatal spruit. Mr. Egerton's story was clear and calmly told, and it was evident that anticipation of being seriously attacked was the last thing dreamt of by all, from the commanding officer down to the little drummer boy, who was beating away his rub-a-dub-dub as the band, playing a popular tune, moved along at the head of the long line of waggons conveying the belongings of the regiment to Pretoria. The men were scattered over a line of road guarding their transport as it wound slowly along, the bright sun shining in the heavens in all its South African glory, nothing to disturb the serenity of the picture, or suggest a want of security. 'They managed it beautifully,' said Egerton, as, faintly smiling, he closed his bloodshot eyes and stretched his weary limbs; and feeling it would be a sin to rob him of his much-needed repose, I thanked him for his information and withdrew. A fine specimen of a typical Englishman was Egerton, cool in the hour of danger, with plenty of that resource of heart and head which has often enabled success to be snatched in the darkest hour. I trust the fates will permit our meeting somewhere again, if only to review the peculiar incidents of our first acquaintance on the eventful morning after 'Bronkhorst Spruit.'

The arrival of Mr. Egerton and Sergeant Bradley (94th), with the circumstantial detail of the disaster before mentioned, had the effect of rousing slumbering energies to life; activity and movement supplied the places of supineness and carelessness; and early in the day, the market square at Pretoria witnessed a remarkable and memorable scene. The principal portion of the population were assembled; the mounted and foot volunteers forming three sides of a hollow square into which the Administrator, Sir W. Owen Lanyon, accompanied by Colonel Bellairs, C.B., the Commandant of the Transvaal, Lieutenant-Colonel Gildea, the Garrison-Commandant of Pretoria, and the members of the Executive Council, rode; and on drawing rein, the Colonial Secretary in a loud voice read the proclamation of martial law. The chief officer of the Engineers, Major le Mesurier, propounded to the public generally a scheme of defence by withdrawing from the town to the military camp outside, and another defensive position to be constructed between the walls of the gaol or 'Tronk' and those of the convent buildings, which latter comprised a neat block, including a school and chapel attached. His theory, evidently come to subsequently to the intelligence of the disaster to the 94th, was that the town was spread over too great an area to be successfully held by the limited number of available troops and volunteers, and street-fighting would induce catastrophes and mistakes, and that the safer plan would be the concentration of the defence at the two points named—a theory that did not require a severe course of military training to grasp. The speech of the Major was warmly received,

as also the subsequent observations of Colonel Bellairs and Colonel Gildea, who, on behalf of the Government, gave the public assurance that they would be responsible for all damage to property in the event of military necessity requiring the town to be shelled, presuming that the Boers occupied it in force. The latter, in a warlike speech, called upon all men able to hold a rifle to stand forward and do so; and on the principle of the gallant Henry before Agincourt, conjured those who had no stomach for the fight to straight depart; and although he did not add that 'crowns for convoy' would be put into their purse, he gave them three hours to clear out—a notice very few availed themselves of. He closed his oration by calling for 'three cheers for the Queen,' which were lustily given, popular enthusiasm having by this time worked itself up to white heat—even to the pitch of presenting the spectacle of the mildest clergyman I ever met walking about with a Snider rifle in his hands, though I fancy the 'Thirty-nine Articles' were better understood by him than breeches, sights, twists or elevations. In reply to my query as to what he purposed doing with his implement of sudden death, he said he might shoot one of the enemy's horses, though he wouldn't like to injure the rider; and subsequent experience showed that it was not always so easy to select the one from the other, nor so wonderfully difficult to miss both.

The Engineer officer's scheme of defence was adopted. Men were enrolled, companies of foot volunteers formed, officers appointed; another mounted volunteer corps raised, known as 'Nourse's Horse,' commanded

by Captain Nourse, a young Colonial soldier, and to which the Transvaal Mounted Police—a corps of half-breeds—were attached. As soon as these preliminaries were despatched, and the members of the Government had withdrawn from the market square, a scene of energy and moving incident began that almost baffles description. The contents of stores, requisitioned by the Commissariat Department, moved rapidly up to the camp, as fast as the transport mule waggons could bear their freight; private individuals hurried up beds and bedding, furniture and household goods to the chosen positions of the Tronk Laager and the military lines beyond. Into tents, sheds, marquees, soldiers' huts, into and under bullock waggons, everywhere and anywhere that temporary shelter could be found, were hurried and hustled the families of the townspeople; no favour shown to individuals, each and everyone did as best he or they could to secure such comforts so sudden a transition from house and home could afford, and did it with a will, too, and without the same worry and confusion that would, I feel sure, have resulted to any other than a South African community—a proof, if one were needed, that the school for emergency has many graduates in the land redeemed from the Kaffir and the Hottentot. Horses were now 'commandeered' by the Government, and equines of all shapes, forms and sizes were pressed into service; and many an ancient moke, upon whose back the pressure of a saddle was unknown, was enrolled as a charger and bidden to snuff the battle from afar. I sold three of my horses to a Government contractor immediately I heard that 'commandeering' was ordered.

'Commandeering' is a South African term which refers to the taking over, or otherwise seizing, in the name of the governing body, any and every article deemed necessary to the successful carrying on of warfare, with or without payment or acknowledgment. The contractor took my three horses, and they did their duty as the bearers of those somewhat nondescript and anomalous warriors, the Mounted Infantry, which some persons might deem related to that historic corps the 'Horse Marines.' Mounted Infantry, however, will probably be much more heard of should grim war again select South Africa as his battle-ground, and had such an arm been attached in sufficiently proportionate numbers to the column of the 94th, the story of defeat and destruction at 'Bronkhorst Spruit' might have remained unwritten.

Matters had now become really serious in Pretoria, and I was fairly at a loss what to do with my waggon and baggage, which the night before I had placed for safety in the Commissariat-yard, round which some banks of sand-bags had been raised and a mitrailleuse placed before the scheme of evacuating the town had been adopted.

Holding a roving commission as correspondent to some leading home journals, it struck me that a brilliant opportunity had arrived to utilize the exceptional situation in which we were placed; and with a view to seeing all that was to be seen of the stirring events likely to follow, I spoke to Lieutenant-Colonel Gildea, upon whom the duty of commanding the garrison fell, and offered my services for any special duty in which I would have the

opportunity of gratifying my desires to secure pabulum for readers at home. He received me very kindly, and said he would attach me to his own personal staff, conditionally to the concurrence of Colonel Bellairs; and in a couple of hours' time notified that the necessary sanction was obtained, and a place for my waggon assigned close to his own quarters, and contiguous to the Intelligence Department. My baggage I deposited in the canteen of the Scots Fusiliers, where it was carefully watched over by the presiding genius of Bacchus, one Sergeant-Major Watts, a Ganymede who, although he did not supply nectar to the gods on Olympus, had a very fair ale at a shilling a glass, and ginger-beer at threepence per pot, which while it lasted was much sought after, and the collapse of which went to prove that the supply was unequal to the demand. The evening of the next day, the 22nd of December, saw 3,700 men, women, and children crowded into the camp, and the following morning things began to assume a more ship-shape appearance. The clumps of tents, sheds, bungalows, and bullock-waggons that did temporary duty for houses and homes were divided into wards; and wardmasters, quartermasters, sanitary officers, with respective duties of keeping order, issuing of rations, and securing attention to sanitary matters, were appointed to each. Every person was rationed by Government, and the following scale was duly posted as the allowance for men, women, and children; but, except in the matter of meat, bread, and tea, scarcely adhered to. The men were to be supplied with $1\frac{1}{4}$ lb. of bread, $\frac{2}{3}$ oz. of coffee, $\frac{1}{6}$ oz. of tea, $2\frac{1}{2}$ oz. of sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. of salt, and $1\frac{1}{4}$ lb. of

fresh meat per day. The women, as being the weaker vessels, and presumably possessing lighter appetites, were given half the men's allowance; while children under twelve were compelled to put up with a fourth—a regulation which had the effect of multiplying the ages of juveniles to such a degree as to leave it a doubtful question as to whether a race of dwarfs had not been propagated in Pretoria, so small for their age did many of these twelve-year-old youngsters appear.

While the population of the town were settling down into the enjoyment of living under canvas roofs and wooden sheds, the defensive arrangements were being completed. Two small forts or block-houses were erected on a mountainous chain lying due south from the camp and running from east to west. These two block-houses, known as Forts Commeline and Tullichewan respectively, the former named after the young Engineer officer who designed them both, commanded a view of an extensive tract of neighbouring country, had flag-signal and heliograph stations attached, and the amount of conversation carried on with the garrison office by these means during the day, and by a bull's-eye lamp at night, was unlimited; and the brilliant flashes of the heliograph, as it caught the sun's rays, and flickered and glittered its dazzling 'dots and dashes,' was picturesque in the extreme.

The garrison office was situated almost in the centre of the camp, and the business was carried on under a temporary erection of boards with strips of galvanized iron laid over for roofing purposes, and a large canvas sail attached, which at night or during inclement weather

was dropped in front as a protection to books and papers. A notice-board was placed immediately in front, as also a small awning of iron roofing, the latter a protection from sunshine and shower for the Colonel, his staff, and the orderlies—a trio of the latter always in attendance.

Nearly all the leading people of the Executive Council and corporate body went into harness in some capacity or other. The Chief Justice became a sanitary superintendent; the Puisne Judge an issuer of rations; the Government Auditor distinguished himself as an amateur commissary-general; the Mayor acted as chief wardmaster and superintended the correct allowance of beef and bread given to the various wardmasters for further distribution to the residents of their limited and often crowded districts. Other officials displayed their enthusiasm by joining volunteer companies and shouldering the rifle, and it was no uncommon sight to behold a lately spruce clerk of strictest Government official propriety rubbing down his mud-bespattered steed with a wisp of straw, while the cord-riding breeches and boots which adorned his own extremities evidenced by their appearance that they had enjoyed a fair share of the dirty work of the previous night's patrol.

A well-known lawyer, an advocate of the High Court, gave up parchment and sheepskin and devoted himself to the manufacture of 'biltong' (dried strips of meat), while a Nonconformist clergyman did good service in some nondescript capacity, the chief point of which consisted in giving an audible notice to put out your light, when the 'last post' sounded at the ninth hour of the evening, after which no person was permitted to move

about the camp unless secured by that 'open, Sesame' of sentry's gates, the countersign for the night.

On the 24th December, Gatonby, mine host at Ferguson's, the hotel where I had given leg-bail to the Zulu constables, arrived with the intelligence of a concentration of Boers at his place, on the Heidelberg road, and conveying a despatch from their leaders to Sir Owen Lanyon, modestly requesting possession of Pretoria within ten hours. The Hunter of the Zambesi was silent and non-communicative, beyond assuring us that the enemy meant business and would probably immediately attack us; and, as though his ideas and those of the powers that were accorded, the fiat went forth to turn in fully armed and clothed—a system of nocturnal rest I had enjoyed for the previous six nights, and was beginning to think a little monotonous. Before doing so, however, I took a stroll through the lines of the Mounted Infantry, Nourse's Horse, and 'Our Boys,' as the 'Carabineers' had begun to be familiarly styled. All were fully in readiness to meet any night attack that might be made; and the latter I found mostly sleeping in the open air, behind a slight wooden barricade some three or four feet high, which they had erected at the extreme west of the camp; their tents all struck, and every man with his seventy rounds of ammunition stuffed into the bandolier around him: good boys, capital young fellows, who had forsaken the desk and the store, the office and the bank, and taken up the trade of war at a few hours' notice, to do what they considered their duty when they felt their countrymen were in danger. The banks of cloud were louring up and blackening out

the luminous rays of the pale stars—the same orbs which looked down sweetly and serenely nearly nineteen hundred years before, on the eve of that day which heralded a message of 'Peace to earth and goodwill to men'—the same stars that now fitfully gleamed through vapoury eclipse upon the shadowy forms of moving sentries, whose silence was only broken when an unusual noise or approaching footstep brought forth the hoarse challenge of 'Halt! who goes there?' to collide in its harshness with the intensity of the quietude around.

By Christmas Day people seemed to have comparatively settled down to their strange positions, and but for the unfortunate interference of Jupiter Pluvius, might possibly have enjoyed as merry a celebration of that event as the circumstances would have permitted; but the water-god sent a deluge, and what between rain, wind, thunder, and lightning, anything more truly unpleasant than the condition of men, women, and children can scarcely be imagined. When the rain comes down in the Transvaal, a remark equally applicable to most parts of Southern Africa, it does so in no stinted draught. The tropical watering-pot seems to be filled to repletion, and the apertures of the rose-nozzle are more than an ordinary size, so that its upsetting on this occasion was attended by a scene of discomfort in some cases pitiable to behold—flooded tents, beds and bedding soaked and floated out, children crying and mothers vainly essaying to battle against the elements and procure a dry spot for their little ones, while the drenching rain came down in torrents, the thunder rattled, crashed, and rumbled; and thus, with the electric

flashes brilliantly lighting up this extraordinary agglomeration of people, the eighteen hundred and eightieth celebration of the rising of Bethlehem's star was kept in the camp and laagers of Pretoria's townspeople and their defenders.

CHRISTMAS IN LAAGER.

PRETORIA, TRANSVAAL, DECEMBER 25TH, 1880.

I.

How would you like it, I ask you to ponder,
  People of England, at home at your ease?
Christmas approaches—oh, tell it with wonder!—
  The mud in our tents rising up to our knees,
Our canvas roofs dripping, our footsteps oft tripping,
  'Mid the pegs and the cords that secure our marquees,
Whilst children are squalling, and commandants bawling,
  A babel of sounds from an unpleasant squeeze.

II.

In huts we are huddled in glorious confusion,
  'Midst waggons we tumble, and roll 'neath the wheels,
A stable we'd deem now palatial profusion,
  A kennel a boudoir where luxury steals.
The lights ordered out by the law that is martial,
  We grope in the dark for our comfortless beds,
And coiling around 'neath a clothing but partial,
  We envy the tom-cats at home on the leads.

III.

We hear the hoarse voice of the sentry outspeaking,
  As he loudly proclaims his 'Halt! who goes there?'
And we wish in our hearts that the daylight was breaking,
  And with it were broken this wretched Boer scare.
Christmas! great heaven! whose memories pleasant
  Well up in the mind-spring, and days that are flown
Come back as a contrast to mark the dim present,
  And add to the horrors we now call our own.

IV.

We think of the boughs of the ivy and holly,
  Then gaze on the muddled confusion around;
We call back the friends who were merry and jolly,
  And the yells of an infant responsively sound.
We pity you, madam, excusing the failing
  Of temper you show under comfortless odds;
You well may be pardoned if, anger prevailing,
  You question this world a creation of God's.

V.

The horses they stamp, and the oxen are roaring,
  The wind whistles cold through the rent canvas roof,
The lightning oft flashes, the rain is downpouring,
  And angelic temper is put to the proof.
The road is a swamp, and the 'Veld' is an ocean,
  The sluits rush in torrents, no shelter is sure,
And this Christmas so 'merry,' I have formed a grim notion,
  Will be cursed by the many who grin and endure.

VI.

Christmas! the feast that is loved by the olden;
  Christmas! so longed for by those that are young;
Christmas! whose memories are happy and golden;
  Christmas! whose praises so oft have been sung;
Christmas! whose beef and plum-puddings remind us
  Of youthful stomachics, of draught and of pill;
Christmas! whose joys and festivities blind us
  To the certain dismay we shall feel at the bill.

VII.

Christmas! whose message brought 'peace and goodwill' here;
  Christmas! whose berries hang bright in the hall;
Christmas! whose carols remain to us still dear,
  Though Africa's sunshine dispels their ice-pall;
Christmas! the time of the sweetest sweethearting;
  Christmas! when friendships all firmer may grow,
Christmas! the hour of kind meeting and parting—
  This, this was the Christmas our memories know.

* * * * * * *

VIII.

Christmas! our women all anxiously dreading;
  Christmas! our men with arms in their hands;
Christmas! our children now curiously treading
  The 'laager' constructed by soldierly bands;
Christmas! awaiting the call to the battle;
  Christmas! bedraggled and dabbled in mud;
Christmas! enlivened by musketry's rattle;
  Christmas! all stained by our countrymen's blood.

CHAPTER II.

SETTLING DOWN—OUR FORTIFICATIONS—THE STORY OF A MITRAILLEUSE—JOURNALISM EXTRAORDINARY—'THE NEWS OF THE CAMP' CHRISTMAS DAY—AN EQUESTRIENNE—SCOUTING THE COUNTRY—THE DOCTOR'S BELL—AN IDYL IN PROSE.

CHRISTMAS DAY, 1880, is a date to be long remembered by those whose fortune placed them within the defensive positions chosen by the military authorities at Pretoria, whose martial fiat had superseded all civil law, and whose chief object was now to hold the beleaguered capital of the Transvaal until such time as relief should come. I doubt whether history affords a parallel instance of the government of a British Colony being entirely and suddenly cut off from all communication outwards, and beleaguered in its own capital, its external powers completely nullified, and its will internally exhibiting symptoms of semi-paralysis. Christmas Day presented a cheerful aspect in camp; the beds and bedding, which had undergone a severe soaking during the previous night, were placed in the air to dry, and continuous were the lamentations of the house-wives—or tent-wives, to speak more correctly—as they tried to secure the drying powers of a somewhat fickle sun, which at times blazed forth in all its refulgent glory, and at others crept behind a grey bank of clouds, the period of its absence seeming interminable.

I took a stroll in the early morning through the camp, and certainly the condition of things was trying in the extreme: slop and mud everywhere; half-naked women trying to succour their more naked children; mattresses pulled out of tents; bedclothes hung on the ropes, clothes sharing a similar fate; constant struggling with damp wood to create a fire, where a cup of coffee might be made; discomfort and unhappiness reigning supreme. The wonderful thirsty soil of South Africa soon sucked up the superfluous wet, and people became more cheerful as severe discomforts lessened, and shortly began to settle down again; and in most cases where tents were occupied, their tenants dug trenches round their canvas dwellings to prevent a repetition of the washing-out process of Christmas Eve. The defensive positions, where the civil population foregathered with their defenders, now consisted of the military camp and lines, and the Convent Redoubt and Tronk Laager. In the former were huddled the major portion of the civil population of Pretoria; the Royal Scots Fusiliers; about half a battery of Royal Artillery; some sixty men of the Mounted Infantry, 94th Regiment, and Royal Scots Fusiliers; two Mounted Volunteer Corps; the 'Pretoria Carabineers,' and Nourse's Horse—the whole under the command of Colonel Gildea, R.S.F. In the latter were placed 450 Foot Volunteers, and an equal number of civil population, mostly women and children, who occupied the space enclosed by the Tronk (gaol) walls, leaving the open square, formed by two barriers of planks, earth-barrels, and sand-bags, running from the convent buildings to the prison in the occupation

of the volunteer soldiery; the supreme command of this position being held by the senior officer of Engineers, Major Le Mesurier, R.E. The nuns of the convent lived principally in the sacristies and ante-rooms of their little chapel, giving up their school and other apartments to the exigencies the occasion had created. Two of the clerics attached to the convent being Irish priests, assorted themselves presumably as chaplains to the volunteers, and were always to be found well to the front when any fighting was going on—a circumstance which goes to prove that, whether priest or layman, your Irishman is a fighting animal 'all the world around.' About 300 yards to the south-east of the Convent Redoubt, and commanding the 'Poort,' or entrance through the southern range of mountains, beyond which lay the roads to Potcheffstroom and Heidelberg, was placed a small earth and stone bastion, known as Fort Royal, occupied by some eighty men of the 94th Regiment, under Captain (now Major) Campbell, who also discharged the onerous, difficult, and often unpleasant duties of Provost-marshal with credit to himself, securing an unquestionable popularity from all sorts and conditions of men. From Fort Royal, a fine distant view of the Lydenburg and Middelburg roads approaching Pretoria was to be had; a small Krupp gun commanding these approaches at long range. On the southern aspect a mountainous chain extended, on which two block-houses, armed each with a small Krupp gun, and garrisoned by an officer and twenty-five men, with provisions for three weeks, were erected. These were called Forts Commeline and Tullichewan,

named respectively after the young Engineer who constructed them, Lieutenant Commeline, R.E., and the paternal residence in the Highlands of Scotland of Mrs. Gildea, the wife of the Garrison Commandant. They were capable little forts—not much use against artillery, but serviceable as block-houses and look-out points of vantage. The military authorities thought so much of the Engineer's skill in planning them, that they promoted him to the command of the one called after him; a kind of reward much on a par with that of Dionysius, when he crammed the inventor of the Brazen Bull into his species of torture to first test its merits. I went up to see the Engineer in Cloudland one day, and found him tolerably comfortable, with a waterproof sleeping-place, plenty of books, a commanding view of the surrounding scenery, and as fairly-filled a larder as could be honestly expected; the contents of which he produced in an *al fresco* luncheon, which would have been more appreciated if the sun had not been 120° outside, and the fort within very much the temperature of the 'hot room' of an Oriental bath. Wire entanglements were spread around the approaches to these forts; abbatis, forked branches, sand-bagged loops for marksmen —in fact, everything that could be deemed satisfactory for the purveying of an early morning meal of lead to the Boer in the event of his inclinations leading him to Pretoria *viâ* the heights above its military lines. As to the camp itself, it was comparatively unfortified; a sort of fort, wherein was placed the hospital, was formed from a number of stores, military prison, dynamite-room, etc., and embrasured on its northern face, where

a few old guns were placed in position, and the grandiloquent name of Fort Victoria bestowed upon it. A few squares were built, with wooden walls, a couple of hundred yards of wire fencing put up, and a mitrailleuse mounted at an angle pointing to the 'Poort;' and in the immediate vicinity of the 'District Office,' a bungalow, devoted to Sir Owen Lanyon and Colonel Bellairs, C.B., the Civil Administrator and Military Commandant of the Transvaal respectively.

Strolling round to view the defences, I came suddenly and simultaneously upon the mitrailleuse and Finance Secretary Mr. C. E. Steele, the latter doing duty now as assistant commandant of the Convent Redoubt, having forsaken figures for battalion drill. 'Have you seen the mitrailleuse?' said he. I had seen it before, but concluded I might possibly hear something more about it by not admitting the fact, so I prevaricated and learned its curious history. It was French make undoubtedly, with the Imperial Eagle and letter 'N,' a significant index of its era of Napoleonic imperialism; and I was not surprised to learn that it had ground out a quarter of a hundred bullets every time its handle gyrated, carrying death and destruction into those advancing Teuton battalions, before whom, ere night fell, a nation and a dynasty were alike o'erthrown, on the memorable battle-field of Sedan. Thence it accompanied its victorious captors to Berlin, and when the head of the South African Republic, President Burghers visited Europe to extend ideas that were already much too advanced for the Transvaal people, he received this remarkable piece of ordnance as a token of amity from the old Kaiser

Wilhelm, Emperor of Germany. It was brought to Africa and landed at Delagoa Bay, and dragged by oxen through that dangerous strip of country known as the Tsetse-fly belt. Ox-team after ox-team were sacrificed in the endeavour to bring it home to the Transvaal capital; the bones of the brawny bullocks bleaching the road, and pointing out the track of the mitrailleuse as though its contents had been belched out with fire and smoke, leaving a trail of desolation behind it.

It seemed the grimmest of irony to now behold its twenty-five eyes peering over a sand-bag embrasure, ready to shatter and splinter the very men who had toiled and moiled in bringing it to where it was, and who in all probability had hailed its arrival with the warmest congratulations.

A circular laager, occupied principally by married men and their families, and formed by a ring of bullock-waggons, inside which tents were pitched and sheds erected, was placed at the western wing of the camp; a chain of sentries from the Civil Guard—a body of men unattached to any regularly constituted corps of the Mounted or Foot Volunteers—forming a mighty cordon in its front, completing our defences. No, not completing, for I have forgotten 'The Executive Council Brigade,' all members of the Legislative Assembly, a most war-like body to look at, and who, it was currently reported, were sworn to defend the mess-room to the last sweet biscuit and glass of sherry.

Sir Owen Lanyon, in reply to my query as to what position he held in this distinguished and exclusive corps, replied that he was 'lance-corporal;' apropos of

which a story went the rounds, that during the 'brigade's' mess hour, a couple of nights after its formation, a lively young officer of the Scots Fusiliers went quietly to work and secreted the rifles of the 'Executive;' and the 'lance-corporal,' who was probably in the secret, turned out his men suddenly, and great was the consternation and astonishment, and quite unparliamentary the language of the collective wisdom of the country, when guns and bandoliers were found to be 'not lost, but gone before' they ought to have done. The Attorney-General had but a brief-bag to brandish, the Colonial Secretary a bundle of correspondence to hurl at the enemy, while the remaining half-dozen rank and file had nothing more dangerous to threaten the foe with beyond a promise to repeat a few of their annexation speeches made in the Legislative Council—which, by the way, might have acted more seriously upon the attacking Boers than their rifles would have done, had they found them. It is said, however, that they responded to their 'lance-corporal's' call some seven or eight strong, and having formed square to receive cavalry, marched past in column, and executed a few more evolutions in which the contrast of one private of six feet six inches high was rather pronounced as against another of five feet nothing, they were dismissed with a caution.

Christmas Day saw issued from the press the first copy of a little journal, the *News of the Camp*, and as its files have since been characterized by so eminent an authority as the London *Times* as a 'veritable journalistic curiosity,' I must claim the indulgence of

my readers for an editor's vanity in describing the origin of this typographical bantling.

The plant, type, printing presses, etc., of the *Transvaal Argus* having for security's sake been brought into camp when the evacuation of the town of Pretoria was decided upon, a roofless bungalow was set apart for their reception. The manager and former proprietor of this journal, Mr. C. W. Deecker, and myself, had some conversations on the subject of publishing a camp newspaper, which my connection with the staff of the Garrison Commandant suggested opportunities and facilities for editing. It was settled that I should bring the matter before the military authorities, and he would try and arrange with Mr. C. K. White, the then proprietor of the *Argus*, for the use of the plant, machinery, types, inks, printers, Kaffir steam-power, etc., that went to make up the constituent elements of the Transvaal thunderer.

Both applications were successful, the military authorities, however, reserving what was virtually a right of censorship under the thin disguise of preventing anything inimical to the interests and secrets of the defence being published, and also retaining the privilege of using the columns of the journal for the publication of all notices, district orders, etc.

I now removed my waggon to a plot of ground adjacent to the bungalow wherein the *Argus* type was placed, and with a bell-tent and some canvas sails, constructed a somewhat original editorial department. My waggon continued my sleeping-place, and was comfortable enough, being well raised from the damp ground

and secured from the rain by a water-tight roof. From this roof a big transport waggon-sail was carried over to, and half around, the bell-tent, wherein my confrère, Deecker, made himself exceptionally comfortable; the thin end of the wedge of luxury having crept in shaped and formed as an iron bedstead, with, sad to relate, the enervating influences of blankets and—tell it not in Gath—yea, verily, sheets!

The space between waggon and tent was ingeniously roofed in with the canvas sails or waggon-cover stretched on telegraph poles, a torpedo notice-board forming one of the supports at the entrance; and above all an ancient Union Jack, splitting itself into shreds by the force of its own rottenness and the strength of the Transvaal breezes. A couple of privates of the Fusiliers rigged up the editor's quarters, and the humour of one of them—whom afterwards, poor fellow, I saw killed in action—reached its height as he returned with the torpedo notice-board, exclaiming in a fine Irish brogue:

'It's divil a many Boers 'ill come near yez when they see this boord up.'

Surely never was paper printed under such singular auspices—a brick-walled bungalow for a printing-office, with canvas thrown over its unfinished roof, through which the rain penetrated; a gentle water-spout running down the compositor's back as he stood, composing-stick in hand, with a bandolier of Martini-Henry or Snider cartridges over his shoulder, his white apron for a uniform, and his rifle lying suggestively near his printing frame. And how would you editors at home like to edit a paper during the day after being on guard

Editorial Department of the *News of the Camp*.

up to the knees in mud all night, or sleeping in a pair of leather breeches, long boots, and jack-spurs, with a bandolier instead of a wife's arms as a necklace, a bag of cartridges as a bolster, and a Snider carbine for a sleeping partner? Nor were our surroundings more agreeable—for cheek by jowl were squatted an interesting collection of Hottentots, half-breeds, and semi-Kaffirs, their waggons, their wives, and their children. This happy-family crowd rejoiced in the gorgeous misnomer of 'Intelligence Department,' being a corps of coloured scouts or spies, raised in a misguided moment by the then Surveyor-General of the Transvaal. This brilliant corps, whose information was always unreliable, often totally false, and whose 'intelligence' appeared to be only exhibited in successful forays upon farm-yards — their saddle-bows generally exhibiting pumpkins, fowls, ducks, etc., after a trip outside—were in cases where real danger was to be anticipated, conspicuous by an exhibition of that absence of body which sometimes indicates extreme presence of mind.

No one more than the gentleman who raised them subsequently deplored more bitterly their worthlessness, and the mistaken confidence which had been placed in their 'intelligence.'

My next waggon neighbours were a young Englishman, who had come out on a shooting excursion to the Zambesi, a Yorkshire man named Mitchelson, and who had good-naturedly given the shelter of his waggon to a Scottish settler from New Zealand; a civil engineer from the same place, and a travelling companion of his own from Natal. They kept not open house, but open

waggon, and as long as their supply of 'square face' gin lasted, were never without friends dropping in, who, waiving all formalities, sedulously punished their liquor with unflagging zeal. Some of these were so pertinacious in their repeated visits that the term 'ginflies' was given to them, a sobriquet they retained until 'the keg ran dry.' At the left and rear of our editorial quarters were the lines and tents of 'Nourse's Horse, while farther down on the right were camped the 'Pretoria Carabineers,' their horses tied to a picket-line, and the men making themselves palatially happy in the stables, from which their brutes were ejected. At the right was a military wash-house, where some half a dozen soldiers' wives operated from early morning until dusk, and whose language and conversation were neither subdued, refined, nor limited, and only to be fairly excelled by that of the intelligent intelligencers in our own immediate vicinity. In fact, our editorial surroundings were not of a character to inspire literary efforts, and of our neighbours it would have been safe to say:

'You think they are Crusaders sent
From some infernal clime,
To pluck the eyes of sentiment
And dock the tail of Rhyme;
To crack the voice of Melody,
And break the legs of Time.

The first issue of the *News of the Camp* consisted of a small fly-sheet, distributed gratuitously through the various wards of the civil population and the companies and troops of regulars and volunteers enrolled. In this

issue the intention of its editors was duly set forth in the following publisher's notice :

'It is intended to publish the *News of the Camp* at noon every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. It will contain all the official news and orders, and the editors will endeavour to procure as much interesting information of camp life and doings outside as it is possible to obtain. This day's issue is only one quarter the size the journal usually will be, as the pouring rain has penetrated through our canvas roof and sadly interfered with the harmony of our arrangements.'

The merits of the journal as an advertising medium were set forth in the following continuation of the notice.

'This journal possesses the largest circulation of any periodical published in the district of Pretoria, having readers and subscribers extending within a radius of fully one mile and a half from the office of publication. We anticipate that the literary public will rush our circulation up to the "Standard" or the "Telegraph," and our supply of "Daily News" will form an "Era" in these stirring "Times" to "Echo" through the "Globe" from "St. James's" and "Pall Mall" around "The World." "Truth" will be "Daily Chronicle"d, and "Graphic"ally illustrated; "Society" will have "Sporting Times," and "Observers" may find "Fun," as "Funny Folks" will contribute to our columns. If our "European Mail" is stopped, correspondents will find us an impartial "Referee," and though "Bell's Life in London" may possibly advantage ours, and "Belgravia" and "Temple Bar" have greater attrac-

tions than the Tronk Battery or the Convent Laager, we shall probably soon be able to forward some "London News" that will resound throughout "The Empire."'

The paper was styled 'A Journal of Facts, Fancies, Notifications, Gossip, and General Chit-chat, published in the Military Camp of her Majesty's Forces defending the beleaguered inhabitants of Pretoria,' and took for its motto the Shakespearian quotation, slightly altered, of 'Cribbed, cabined, confined, bound in.' The price was made the uniform one of sixpence per copy, and agents were appointed to whom the supplies for each company, troop, or ward, were delivered in a bulk quantity to be delivered by them to their various subscribers. The circulation was an average of 500 copies per issue. Our agents comprised the captains of companies, the masters of wards, etc., and included a judge of the High Court, the state secretary of the former Republic, the resident magistrate of Pretoria, the chaplain of the forces—all of whom regularly put in an appearance on publication days, and marched off with their bundles of papers with as much enthusiasm as a London Strand arab with his parcel of 'Hecho speshuls,' or 'Globes, last dishun.' The getting out of the paper was quite an event, and the first issue was accepted as an earnest of better things to come.

With all the relief of an editor who has got his paper safely out, I walked down to the Garrison Office, where I arrived just in time to hear a little, delicate, lame lady offer her services to Colonel Gildea to try and run the blockade with despatches to Sir George Colley, in Natal,

on whom our hopes of relief were now fixed. The offer was declined, but there is no doubt that it was sincere, and subsequent knowledge of the lady (a Mrs. H——) led me to believe would have been successful—and was another of the several instances I shall have to enumerate of the courage and devotion of the weaker sex, during the Transvaal War of 1880 and 1881. I was much interested in this little woman—in all respects a lady, and who was undoubtedly a figure in our camp—she being allowed to retain two of her horses, for her own use and that of a Kaffir servant, who invariably followed after her wherever she rode. I often thought what a sensation she might have created in the 'Lady's Mile,' with those two rough African ponies and her woolly-headed 'Jeames,' if some fairy power could suddenly drop them amongst the fashionable equestrians of the 'Row.'

On my arrival in the Garrison Square I found the Coloured Intelligence (?) drawn up, waiting on the Circumlocution branch of the Supply Department. They had been ordered to go out at five o'clock, and had been waiting some two and a half hours beyond that time for their equipments. They got their saddles first, and their girths last, and were supplied gradually with bridles without bits, and stirrups without leathers, and in all probability went eventually away with Martini-Henry carbines and Snider cartridges—not that it mattered very much, for they were neither useful nor ornamental; and it would have been only on a par with some confused departmental ideas then reigning, amongst which the arming of a number of Foot Volunteers with short

carbines, and the Pretoria Carabineers and Nourse's Horse, both mounted forces, with long Martini rifles, was an instance.

The day after Christmas Day being Sunday, a notice was published that religious services for Protestants, Catholics, Wesleyans, and Dutch Reformers would be held at seven o'clock that morning; and I went round at the hour named to the various places appointed for the different services, but whether the rain had damped the zeal, or the anticipation of Boer attacks disturbed the devotion of the worthy people assembled 'under the British flag,' I cannot tell; but certain it is that the gatherings were decidedly those of 'two and three,' and in some cases did not realize even those inconsiderable numbers.

A short walk brought me from the camp to Fort Royal, and there I found Captain Campbell—his men hard at work improving their defences. The men were cutting a trench, and throwing up the spadefuls of earth as only the Britisher can.

'Well, boys, how are you getting on?'

'Well,' said one fellow, 'we've heard a good deal about gold in the Transvaal, but although we dig plenty, we don't seem to get much of it!'

'There's not much of it in a shilling a day, with canteen beer at sixpence a pot,' said another.

'Stop till this here Boar-shootin' commences,' shouted a third, as he sent a great spadeful of earth flying over the previous speaker — the result of an accident apparently, but one evidently highly relished by himself and his companions.

Coming back by a brick building, standing equidistant between camp, convent, and Fort Royal, I found an Advocate of the High Court superintending a 'biltong' manufactory. In this he was assisted by a number of Kaffirs and half-castes, who were cutting into strings the meat of some defunct 'trekk' oxen, to be further flavoured with salt and pepper, and hung in the air to dry, the result being a not at all unpalatable species of food much in vogue amongst the South African Boers, and the agreeable consumption of which is considerably aided by a very sharp knife with which to pare your 'biltong' strip into wafer-like shreds.

The heliograph flashed down a message: a party of Boers, 150 strong, had been seen patrolling the country to the south of our range of hills, and the Mounted Infantry and a party of Nourse's Horse rode out in hot haste to give them a Christmas-box. Having carried a message from Colonel Gildea to Fort Commeline, I rode down the other side of the mountain and overhauled the Mounted Infantry, who, however, were just a day after the fair, the Boers seen having put distance between them and the party sent after them; and like the famous Duke of York, having ascended the hill, we marched down again and returned to camp, after scouting the country for about three hours.

The Bishop of Pretoria arrived during the evening, having received a safe-conduct pass from Joubert, the Boer Commandant. He reported that the garrison at Standerton was all well, and he seemed inclined to laugh at the precautions taken by our authorities,

apparently thinking so elaborate a scheme of defence unnecessary.

An order was now published that all persons living in huts or tents must be out of them at 6.30 a.m.; bedding to be placed outside; sanitation to be observed; and a medical officer to visit each portion of the camp twice daily, between the hours of 7 and 9, and 3 and 5, his coming to be announced by the ringing of a bell. This latter order was for some time carried out, and a civilian doctor, accompanied by an orderly of the Army Hospital Corps, did the rounds. Bells of a musical kind being scarce, the hospital orderly, with more zeal than discretion, secured a villainous-toned cattle-bell, whose monotonous clang heralded the advent of the doctor on his rounds, and inspired the following anecdote, which may be styled a *News of the Camp* idyl in prose.

'It was eventide in camp; the sun was fast on the declension, the mountain-ridges seemed rising to embrace Sol's golden orb. An anxious mother sat beside a suffering babe—the flush of feverish heat spread from cheek to brow, and the warm colour lost its lambent flame as furtively it spread beneath the bright blue hood which formed a halo around the cherub's head, whilst moans of pain escaped its murmuring lips. Ah, what a sight! The gods looked down and smiled as they beheld that tender matron keeping her watchful ward o'er her sweet babe. Upon a table near were heaped in undulating masses Powders of Dover, Syrup of Winslow, Flour of Polson; whilst over all a dreamy light sped from where, soft burning in its floating bed, shone

silently that flame devoted to both night and childhood. The mother hearkens, as now a sound breaks on her listening ear, and rising, she exclaims, as a strange tintinnabulation seems advancing: "Saved! saved! He comes—I hear a bell!" And rushing madly to the porch, she speaks aloud: "Oh, doctor! do give me something to make this little wretch sleep; he's just enough to drive one mad!" But, alas for human expectations! it was not the doctor she expected, but Kaatje Kaackleback, the Hottentot woman, vending milk; which proved two things: one, that "imitation is the sincerest flattery;" and the other, that more than one cattle-bell can be found in a camp.'

Christmas Day passed, as every day must eventually, whether its hours be pleasant or otherwise; but the greetings offered inside Pretoria's defensive lines could scarcely be construed as 'merry,' though of Mark Tapleys there were not a few who extracted quite an infinite amount of humour out of their present difficulties and miseries, keeping a bright eye on the future, and the thoughts of happier days to come.

Looking into the tent portion of the editorial quarters, before turning in myself, I saw my literary confrère Deecker sleeping soundly in all the luxuries of bed and bedding; so I clambered up to my waggon to follow his example, shrouding the beams of a surreptitious candle, which, stuck in its own grease on the top of an old hat-box, afforded me the privilege of a nightly half-hour's reading in defiance of the audible 'Lights out!' of the reverend sanitary officer of Ward No. I. Hullo! hey! what's that? A shot, by Jove, from the line of

sentries at the west wing! A shot, too, preceded by a challenge. Something serious the matter. Carabineers turning out their guard, too. Where the deuce is my bandolier?

'What's the row, captain?' say I, as Captain D'Arcy bustles up from his Carabineer camp.

'No harm done,' he replies; 'only an enthusiastic sentry who has made cold meat of a straying transport mule, who refused to answer his challenges, shouted in both English and Dutch.'

'Strange it didn't understand the latter,' growls a Boerophobe, poking his head through the slit of an adjacent tent; 'too bad his two-legged relatives, "Oom" Paul Kruger and Co., should have a monopoly of the language.'

'Good-night, Captain.'

'Good-night! Merrier Christmas next year!'

'Same to you! More Boar's-heads on the table and less Boers in the open "veld";' saying which, I turned in to my waggon, and in a few minutes was in the land of dreams.

CHAPTER III.

ARRIVAL OF THE WOUNDED FROM THE HONDE RIVER—THE TRUE STORY OF THE DISASTER TO THE 94TH REGIMENT AT 'BRONKHORST SPRUIT.'

On the 27th of December a flutter of excitement passed through the camp at Pretoria, when it was known that eight men of the 94th Regiment, who had been wounded at the action near the Honde River, had arrived, and brought with them the list of casualties of the fight; the latter certified by the surgeons in charge, and proving more serious than had been anticipated. This list, by the courtesy of Surgeon-Major Skeen, the chief of the Army Medical Staff, I had the privilege of seeing, and it told the sad story of sixty-five lives extinguished for ever, and eighty-three human forms more or less mangled and suffering, whose wounds were characterized in almost all instances as 'dangerous.' The death-roll comprised the names of nearly all the officers who were with the regiment at the fatal spruit—Captain Nairne, Adjutant Harrison, Lieutenant McSwiney; whilst small hopes were entertained for Colonel Anstruther, Assistant-Commissary Carter, Captain Elliott, and Lieutenant Hume. The last-named is the only commissioned officer who lived to relate the story of the disaster, and

Captain Elliott escaped then to meet with an even more tragical death at a later period of the war. On learning the arrival of the wounded I availed myself of the first opportunity to visit the hospital, and secure as much information as possible as to what had occurred; and having interviewed two or three of the men least seriously injured, I was able, with Mr. Egerton's description, and that of Sergeant Bradley, who came in with him, to get some idea of the real circumstances of the case. A paper was also brought in, which had been handed to the officer commanding the column, and was afterwards picked up from the blood-stained field by one of the sergeants, a copy of which I secured. From these and other statements of eye-witnesses of the fray, and the perusal subsequently of most of the official evidence taken and correspondence which transpired in connection with it, I shall endeavour to tell the story of the disaster, and in so doing to 'nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice.'

On the 23rd November, 1880, Colonel Bellairs, in view of the troublous political outlook, despatched, in his official capacity as Commandant of her Majesty's forces in the Transvaal, an order to Colonel Anstruther at Lydenburg to come at once with the head-quarters of the 94th Regiment to Pretoria, a despatch received by the latter four days later. Considerable difficulty occurred in the securing of sufficient transport; that delightful hamper, regimental baggage, requiring no less than twenty-nine ox-waggons to carry it, to which was added two mule-carts, one ambulance, one cart for water, and one for the canteen—thirty-four conveyances

in all. It is said that the transport officer held the opinion that fourteen waggons should be considered sufficient, owing to the difficulty of procuring them; but his opinions appear to have been overruled, and the list of conveyances enumerated were secured. So chary were the owners of ox-waggons to trust their vehicles and teams on what they at least considered a dangerous march, that a guarantee was stipulated for by them of £150 for each waggon, and £10 per head for the draught oxen who pulled them, as security against loss by any contingency whatsoever; a top price, and one at which they could well afford to let their 'yokes' go. To each of these waggons was attached a span of probably not less than sixteen oxen, yoked in pairs; and allowing for the distance that should intervene between the leaders of each team and the tail of the immediately preceding waggon, the column at a concise calculation must have extended over a mile in length, and seemed to court from its very defencelessness the fate which overtook it. Supposing its combatants to have numbered 250 (which they did not), they would naturally make a very meagre fringe of men when extended along so considerable a line of road as this lengthy convoy necessarily spread over; and when it is remembered that the enemy attacking were an active mounted force, mostly marksmen, the result is not astonishing. The difficulty of obtaining sufficient waggons was not got over until December 5th, when the march commenced; and nothing eventful occurred until the 17th of that month, when a despatch from Colonel Bellairs, dated two days previously, was received by the Colonel

commanding, he having then reached the Middleburg side of the Olifants River. Some diversity of opinion has been since expressed as to whether the wording of this despatch was sufficiently strong as a warning to the officer in command of the regiment on the march, and I therefore quote it in full, that my readers may form their own opinions on the subject. It is dated December 15th, and is as follows:

'Five hundred armed Boers are said to have left the Boer Camp, situated forty miles from this on the Potcheffstroom road, yesterday; direction unknown. No hostilities have taken place as yet, but caution should be exercised to guard against any sudden attack or surprise of cattle on the march, especially at the Botha Hill range or defile, between Pretoria and Honey's Farm, about twenty miles from the former. Send forward natives (foreloopers, etc.) to reconnoitre along the tops of and over the hills before advancing.

'Send back a message by bearer as to your whereabouts and when you expect to arrive here.'

This despatch was duly acknowledged by Colonel Anstruther on the 17th of December, he stating that he was at the other side of the Olifants River—which was going down—and that he proposed crossing it that afternoon or the following morning, and coming on as soon as possible. On the 19th the column had reached Honey's Farm, and camped there for the night, the waggons being 'laagered,' and flying sentries placed as outposts 150 yards on each side. This appears to have been done as a precautionary measure, as up to this time, apparently, no knowledge of open

hostilities having occurred at Potcheffstroom or the hoisting of the Dutch flag at Heidelberg had reached the column; nor was it likely they would, except through Boer sources, from whom it was improbable any information would be obtained—that is, of a reliable kind. It was said that at this halting-place Colonel Anstruther was told by a field cornet of the district that he might perhaps meet an assemblage of Boers, but they were going to a friendly meeting; if this statement be true, no words can adequately reprobate information bearing so palpably the imprint of treachery, and given with the evident intention to lull suspicion. The next day, the 20th of December, a little after one o'clock, the long line of waggons, with their guards, were trailing their slow length along, the band of the regiment playing the popular melody, 'Kiss me, mother, kiss your darling,' as they marched at the head of the column, now advancing towards a ford of the Honde River, known as 'Bronkhorst Spruit,' on the opposite side of which a site had been selected for a camping-ground, where two roads branching formed a V. Colonel Anstruther and Mr. Egerton, the latter having previously reconnoitred the ground, rode forward to examine the site of the proposed camp, when their attention was attracted by the approach of three mounted Boers, one carrying a white flag, who debouched from behind a slightly rising ground, partially covered with thorn bushes, to the left. Colonel Anstruther waited their approach, and Mr. Egerton, riding a little farther up the road, saw a large party of mounted Boers riding at top speed from a farm well sheltered by willow and blue gum trees to the crest of

the rising ground, on whose near slope the flag-bearers had debouched, and behind which it was now discovered a large party of mounted men were concealed, and who were moving into position on the flank and head of the column, as their messengers advanced to parley. One of these handed Colonel Anstruther a notification, of which the following is a copy—the original paper—all blood-stained and soiled, was picked up by a sergeant named Briggs and brought in to Pretoria, and ran as follows:

'South African Republic, Heidelberg,
December 19, 1880.

'*To the Commander-in-chief of her Majesty's troops on the road between Lydenburg and Pretoria.*

'SIR,

'We have the honour to inform you that the Government of the South African Republic have taken up their residence at Heidelberg; that a diplomatic commissioner has been sent by them with despatches to his Excellency, Sir W. Owen Lanyon; that until the arrival of his Excellency's answer we do not know whether we are in a state of war or not; that consequently we cannot allow any movement of troops from your side, and wish you to stop where you are, we not being in war with her Majesty the Queen, nor with the people of England, who we are sure to be on our side, if they were acquainted with the position, but only recovering the independence of our country. We do not wish to take arms, and therefore inform you that any movement of troops from your side will be taken by us

as a declaration of war, the responsibility whereof we put on your shoulders, as we know what we will have to do in self-defence.

'We are, Sir, your obedient servants,

'(*Signed*) S. J. P. KRUGER, *Vice-President.*
M. W. PRETORIUS,
P. J. JOUBERT, *Driemanschap.*
W. EDWARD BOK, *Acting Secretary of the Government.*'

Whoever was clever and astute enough to compile this singular document must have been equally aware that no British officer could obey its mandates in disregard of his orders to march to a given point. This fact, together with the place chosen, and its occupation so carefully planned and carried out, even to the details of marking distances from the road to the thorns on the rising ground, where during the parley the Boers were taking position—their steadiness of movement being remarked by even some of the privates of the British force they were surrounding—goes a good way to prove what has been more than once asserted, that the presenting of the notification was merely a ruse to obtain the time necessary to complete their attacking formation. This is a point which has raised considerable diversity of opinion, and while desirous of giving every latitude to the adage that 'all is fair in love or war,' an unprejudiced observer might naturally conclude that it would have been more honest and straightforward to have called upon the commanding officer to lay down his

arms at once than to occupy time with the presentment of a plausibly worded document, whose contents it must be known his duty and honour would bind him to ignore, the more so as such time was availed of in securing a position which rendered the attacking party irresistible. Again, if no state of war was existing between the Boers and the British troops or people, there was no necessity to advance under a white flag, the emblem of truce and cessation of hostilities.

The presentation of this carefully worded document is explainable by the fact that the leaders of the Boer movement were posing before the world, themselves and their followers, as a virtuous people agitating for their freedom quietly and firmly, and desirous to place on the shoulders of the foreign interloper the consequences of that bloodshed they knew must follow their extreme action.

Colonel Anstruther's reply was that of the gallant soldier he was, as, tossing the paper to the ground, he told its bearers that his orders were to go to Pretoria, and those orders he should obey. He then returned to the head of the column, the advanced guard of which, with the band in front, numbered about a hundred and twenty men, the remainder being distributed as guards over the long line of waggons. An order was immediately given to the right company to extend, which was being executed by Captain Nairne, when a heavy volley was poured into their ranks, the captain commanding and half the non-commissioned officers and men of his company falling victims to the well-directed fire. The remainder and the other company lay down and returned the fire of the Boers, who, extended down

the left flank and in a half-moon formation round the head of the column, kept up a withering fire, under which nothing could live. Colonel Anstruther, wounded in five places, lay in front of his fighting line, and cheered on his men, who kept up the fight until more than two-thirds of their number were killed or wounded. Seeing the utter hopelessness of prolonging the struggle, the Colonel ordered 'cease fire' to sound, after exactly twenty-two minutes' fighting, during which the regiment lost, out of a combatant strength of 230 men, no less than 158 of their number *hors de combat.* There was no time to 'laager' the waggons, nor would such a movement have been possible, as the Boers shot down the leading oxen in the teams and made confusion worse confounded amongst them.

The Boers, mostly good marksmen, were estimated at 500 in number, and felt their success assured from the first; so much so, that some were seen steadying their rifles against stones and trees—the forked branches of the thorns making rests for their guns, and rendering their aim more deadly.

The order for surrender having been given, the Boers advanced, and, to their credit be it said, behaved with every consideration to their wounded prisoners—assisting in binding up their wounds, and in no way maltreating or injuring them. It was rumoured that some wounded prisoners had been killed by them, but the only instance I could ever learn was the case of a Private O'Brien, who was with the rear-guard, and left it to join the head of the column. While so doing he was wounded, and continued firing at the Boers

while lying on the ground; and when asked by them to lay down his rifle he refused, and they shot him. The plucky fellow sacrificed his life to his gallantry; his bulldog courage wouldn't permit him to surrender, so he died fighting to the last. Several of the poor little band-boys and drummers were shot and mangled; and in one of the waggons, the wife of the sergeant-major — a Mrs. Fox — was severely wounded by a chance shot which entered the vehicle she occupied. She had the melancholy satisfaction of being the only lady who bled for her Queen during the war. Every officer was struck down early in the fight; and the gallant Colonel and the commissariat officer, Mr. Carter, were both so seriously wounded that it was only a question of time to put an end to their sufferings. The former, hit in five places and with both legs broken, implored Dr. Ward, the surgeon, to attend the other wounded men first, exhibiting the same spirit, with death staring him in the face, which had evidently made him the idol of his officers and men. And while mentioning this instance of self-sacrificing devotion, I may add yet another one. It is the story of a woman's heroism, and tells us how in times of real danger and distress, the sex we are accustomed to associate with timidity and weakness rise to great occasions, exhibiting that courage and resource too often wanting by those who arrogate to themselves the position of their protectors. Accompanying the regiment to Pretoria, and occupying one of the waggons, with her two little yellow-haired fatherless children, was the widow of the late bandmaster, Mrs. Marion Smith—a lady whose

name I freely mention, as her acts deserve to be known that they may be fully appreciated — a lady whose name should ever remain green in the traditions of the 94th Regiment, and be affectionately remembered by the survivors of the fatal day at 'Bronkhorst Spruit.'

A prisoner in the hands of a successful enemy, surrounded by dead and dying, hampered with the charge of two little children scarcely removed from infancy, this courageous yet tender-hearted little woman devoted herself immediately to the succour of the wounded, and was indefatigable, day and night, in her endeavours to alleviate their sufferings. It is said that she sacrificed her personal wardrobe by tearing her clothing into strips to make bandages wherewith to staunch the life-blood of many a poor fellow who was pouring it out in fulfilment of his duty and fealty, and who now, thanks to her thought and care, lives to tell the tale of that awful day, and still more awful night, when the waters of the Honde River were reddened with the life-stream of his comrades in arms. At the hospital camp, formed in the vicinity of the fatal spruit, this lady remained till the close of the war, and for a period of four months exclusively concentrated her attention on mitigating the sufferings of its wounded occupants. Dr. Warde, of the Army Medical Department, fairly shared the ready acknowledgments of the sufferers; and with him at a later date was associated a civil surgeon of Pretoria, Dr. Harvey Crow, who volunteered his services to the Government to go out to the scene of the action, immediately the news of its serious results reached their ears.

The fight over, the Boers took possession of the waggons, which, with all their contents, inclusive of 30,000 rounds of ammunition, Captain Elliott and twenty unhurt prisoners, they bore away to Heidelberg —previously throwing off tents, blankets, and cooking apparatus for the use of the wounded.

The Boers were led by Franz Joubert—a brother of the Commandant-General of that name. An incident indicative of his readiness was related: how, when visiting Colonel Anstruther in his tent, the latter, wounded though he was, asked him to partake of some champagne, which he did, and raising the glass to his lips proposed as a toast, 'The Health of Her Majesty the Queen of England; and may she long reign within her own dominions, and keep her soldiers there,' showing this Cromwellian species of soldier was not deficient in the ability to construct a telling *mot* when occasion offered. He then gave the necessary passes to Mr. Egerton and Sergeant Bradley to enable them to go in to Pretoria for medical aid, but demurred about allowing the use of horses, until at last, wearied of waiting, the two boldly plodded off on foot, and marching all the day and the chief part of the night, reached Pretoria before the break of the following morning, and their arrival there I have already described.

Fifty-eight non-commissioned officers and men were laid in one grave, over which a mound was raised, with a wall built round it, and a wooden cross formed out of pieces of board placed in front, bearing an inscription to the memory of those soldiers who, their warfare now over, slept the sleep that knew no waking beneath.

A most touching incident was related of the fidelity and affection exhibited by a dog belonging to Lieutenant and Adjutant Harrison, which remained all the afternoon by the body, and all night upon the grave of his master; and next day refused to leave until force was applied to drag him from the spot, the poor animal crying piteously from the time his owner was killed.

'The faithful dog of the soldier brave
Still clings to his master, dead;
And sentinel watches his new-turn'd grave,
Nor knows of his spirit fled.

* * * * *

'Oh where is the faithful friend sincere,
Or where can man be found,
Whose truth or affection prove more dear
Than those of the soldier's hound?'

Colonel Anstruther succumbed to his wounds in a short time, as also did Mr. Carter, the officer of transport. The former, in the last despatch he ever signed—for it is safe to assume he was unable from his injuries to do more than dictate and sign it—paid a most generous tribute to his officers and men, and acknowledged in the handsomest manner the considerate treatment he had received from his enemies. Possessed of an evidently generous disposition, he hastened to admit all that was good and favourable in those with whom he came into contact; and possibly this inclination to think better of people than they really are, led him the more easily to subscribe to the universal military opinion held prior to 'Dingaan's Day,' that 'the Boers wouldn't fight.'

Leaving the reader to form his own opinions as to whether the disaster could or could not have been prevented, I close the story of 'Bronkhorst Spruit.' The disaster proved, if such proof was necessary, that it was impossible for an infantry force to march through an enemy's country without the protection of a proportionately strong body of mounted men to prevent its being surprised, and to co-operate in its defence, a practical hint not lost upon some military enthusiasts in Pretoria, who, with 500 red-coats, were prepared to walk over the whole of the Transvaal—a country as big as France, and inhabited almost exclusively by an antagonistic population.

The vision of those wounded and dying soldiers stretched on the parched 'Veld' at 'Bronkhorst Spruit,' can hardly be a pleasant one for the cheese-paring authorities who, to reduce expenditure, but a short time before denuded the Transvaal of the cavalry stationed there, and from further economical motives marched down the men on foot to Natal, selling their horses to the Boers, to be afterwards used by them against the unfortunate 94th foot regiment, whose fate might have been fairly anticipated.

The facts connected with the '94th' disaster at 'Bronkhorst Spruit' are apparently so little known outside South Africa, that I scarcely feel it necessary to apologize for having devoted to them the space of an entire chapter, apart from my own personal reminiscences of the Transvaal War.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BOER INVESTMENT—FIRST BRUSH WITH THE ENEMY AT PRETORIA—SKIRMISH AT SPRINGHAASFONTEIN—MORE WEATHER—THE DESERTED VILLAGE—NEW YEAR'S EVE—CAMP-LIFE—INCIDENTS—SORTIE FROM PRETORIA—CAPTURE OF ZWARTKOPJE LAAGER.

THE enemy's plan of investing Pretoria was novel and effective, and consisted of a series of 'laagers,' or roughly-fortified places, selected near farms in the vicinity of roads leading to the town. Most of these 'laagers' were commanded by kopjes and krantzes, which were roughness itself, and possessed all the elements necessary for strong defensive positions without any assistance from the hand of man. They formed a complete ring at various distances, from three to ten miles round the town, patrolling-parties moving constantly from one to the other, a system of communication being kept up by signal-fires, so that in the event of any particular one of these positions being attacked, reinforcements could be hurried from the others to assist in its defence; or to make demonstrations on the flanks and rear of the attacking party.

On the 28th of December, about nine in the morning, intelligence came into camp that Nourse and a patrol-party of his men were engaged with the Boers near

the Six-mile Spruit ; so I lost no time in saddling up my horse and riding out to be in at the first brush with the enemy near Pretoria. About a mile outside of the camp I met one of D'Arcy's Carabineers, bringing in a wounded man, who, sitting behind on the crupper of the horse, was more than thankful for a nip of brandy I administered to him. Pushing on, I overtook a strong party of the Pretoria Carabineers going out as supports; and almost at the same time another evidence that blood-letting was going on passed in the shape of another brace of men on one steed—the unwounded one of whom called out:

'Don't forget, Belfast fired the first shot, when you publish the next *News of the Camp.*'

I promised not to forget him and the fact as stated, and physicked his patient, who was shot through the shoulder, with another little drop of 'Three Star.'

The Carabineers had meanwhile extended in the open Veld, and were cautiously advancing, when in a little time we met Nourse's men leisurely returning—the skirmish being over, the enemy having withdrawn. A reconnaissance in force, accompanied by two seven-pounder guns, to the place where this skirmish had taken place, was decided upon, and half-past one o'clock in the morning saw the Garrison Square fully occupied by the forces selected to go out, and who appeared tolerably happy in the hope of being permitted to purvey an early allowance of gruel to the Boers outside. The entire force, which included the Carabineers, Nourse's Horse, Mounted Infantry, a couple of companies of Scots Fusiliers, some Royal Artillery,

with a brace of seven-pounders, was under the command of Colonel Gildea, who sent forward the Mounted Volunteers to scout the country in advance, which they did admirably.

We reached the Six-mile Spruit, or rather an eminence commanding it and the country for two or three miles beyond; and at daybreak the guns were ordered up, while the Fusiliers distributed themselves amongst the stones and clumps of bush around.

Quick to the word of command, up came the artillery officer, Lieutenant Hare, and his popguns, and pretty little playthings they proved themselves, and evidently interested a number of Boers, discoverable in the grey dawning light on a ridge about 2,500 yards away; who, after three or four shells had been playfully tossed to them, were evidently of the opinion that discretion was the better part of valour, and rode rapidly away to a farm known as the 'Red House,' on their left. The Carabineers, still preserving their extended order, now crowned the vacated brow, and moved onwards to the farm—a double belt of trees intervening between the farmhouse and the advancing troopers.

Leaving one gun on the heights above the spruit, the Colonel pushed on with the other, some infantry and Nourse's Horse, through the stream, and secured a position much nearer the farmhouse, at which we forwarded another brace of shells. One of these appeared to drop into the laager, or more probably one of the cattle-kraals; for the Boers were seen driving out the cattle in hot haste to preserve their carcases for the less wholesale system of butchery peculiar to their

more economical ideas of household management. The Mounted Volunteers had meanwhile occupied the belt of bush, and a portion of them were working forward to right and left of the farm. Colonel Gildea was burning to support the mounted men and attack the place, but his instructions having been defined, and his operations limited, he was compelled to merely watch the course of things and send a few screeching shells at the laagers and farm-buildings.

'Those cattle would be very useful in Pretoria, Colonel,' said Mr. Brooks, one of the Legislative Council, who had accompanied the staff on the expedition. 'Shall I tell D'Arcy to try and take them?'

'Yes; if he can do so without attacking the house and laager—he must be careful and advance slowly,' replied the Colonel.

Another gentleman who had come out as a 'free shot,' hearing these remarks, galloped away to the front and told Captain D'Arcy to take the cattle; and Mr. Brooks, slinging his double-barrelled rifle behind, trotted down the slope and arrived in time to find the gallant Captain, like Achilles, wounded in the heel, and several of his men and horses also injured, he having made a dash for the cattle-kraal, and caught it hotly from the Boers behind the loopholed walls of the laagers and farm out-buildings.

The Carabineers from the strip of bush kept up a sputtering fire, returned in an equally desultory manner by the Boers, until both parties seemed to tire of the amusement, and with the exception of an occasional

shot now and then at intervals, it almost ceased. An ambulance was sent down for D'Arcy and one of his troopers, a boy of sixteen, son of the Surveyor-General Melvill, who, with his Captain, had also been wounded in the heel, after exhibiting great pluck and coolness. Nourse's Horse were now ordered down, and responded most willingly. Their work was light, however, as the Carabineers, who had been ordered to retire, covered the movement with their own men. I rode round to the ambulance to see Captain D'Arcy. He had received a painful and ugly wound in the foot, and his services were lost to Pretoria for the rest of the investment.

The retirement was now made general, and we re-crossed the spruit; and my reflections were, that as seven horses were killed, wounded, or missing, and half a dozen of their riders were in the hospital, suffering from Boer bullets, and as no apparently tangible damage to counterbalance all this had been inflicted on the enemy, the loss of an entire night's rest was scarcely compensated for by the operations I had assisted at and witnessed.

On the other side of the spruit we met Sir Owen Lanyon and a part of the Executive Council Brigade, the latter looking very determined and ferocious, double-barrelled rifles being in vogue, and bandoliers with apparently unlimited ammunition supplies *de rigueur*. The Coloured Intelligence Department was there also, and seemed to have been having a high old time in the poultry-yard of some neighbouring Dutch-

man; and could the Boer who owned them have been there to count his ducks and chickens, he would have had ample opportunity to work out a considerable exercise in numeration.

By noon we were all back in camp, and concluded the day by the enjoyment of yet another agreeable weather experience, even worse than that of Christmas Eve. First the thunderstorm looked us up, and then the hail looked us down, and the lightning called in, and the rain it rained as though the second edition of the deluge was imminent; and as a fitting climax to all this, the wind set up a dismal howling that would have excited the envy of creation's wolves. Morning's brightening beams displayed a cheerful picture of tents blown down, and beds, bedding, wearing apparel and camp residents out in the sun to dry.

Despite all these annoyances, the order which prevailed throughout the camp was a matter for great congratulation; and where soldiers and civilians, the latter consisting of men, women, and children, were suddenly crowded, comparatively speaking, together, the quiet manner in which every household duty was carried on, and proper respect exhibited by the former for their civilian neighbours, evidenced the discipline and general propriety of conduct of all the military branches of the garrison, and received at the hands of Colonel Bellairs, C.B., prompt acknowledgment in a district order.

Foraging expeditions to farms in the neighbourhood of Pretoria, reconnaissances of positions and skirmishes

with small parties of the enemy, were now matters of daily occurrence.

It was generally conceded that the enemy's patrolling and scouting was as well done as the best troops in the world could have done it. Whether it was good or bad, one thing is certain, that no intelligence from outside of a reliable or direct character was allowed to find its way through the charmed circle of investment —the 'waacht,' or watch, being kept night and day, and, as we afterwards learned, extending down to every river-drift and approach to the Transvaal, as far as the borders of Griqualand West.

I rode into the now deserted village of Pretoria a few days after the new year had been ushered in; and its market square empty and tenantless, its shops closed, its hotels with shutters up, and Provost-Marshal's notices contravening the sale of liquors nailed thereon, the half-finished laager surrounding its church in the centre—all marked the contrast to that busiest of scenes it last presented, when its populace and volunteers assembled to hear the declaration of martial law.

In order that persons resident in camp should not altogether abstract their attention from their household gods in the adjacent town, a notice was published by order of the Garrison-Adjutant in the *News of the Camp*, and posted on the notice-board, to the following effect:

'Ox-waggons will run daily between the fort and the town for the convenience of families desirous of visiting their houses for a few hours. No parcels to be carried except hand-parcels. Women and children

only will be allowed to ride. The waggons will start as follows :

'From the outside of the Fort-gate at 9, 10, and 11 a.m.

'From the Market-square at 3, 4, and 5 p.m.'

In order to pay these visits it was necessary to obtain a printed pass, signed by the Ward-master and countersigned by the Garrison-Adjutant, a duty which eventually became not only monotonous but decidedly fatiguing to the latter gallant officer, who no doubt often cursed the fates that he ever learned to write, or that he had not been christened Tom Smith or Bill Jones, instead of 'Spencer F. Chichester, Lieutenant and Adjutant, R.S.F., Garrison-Adjutant, Pretoria,' which remarkable signature he possibly wrote twenty thousand times during the war. The work of the Garrison Office was pretty heavy, and the way he slashed through passes, requisitions, and reports, might have made a handwriting expert envious. He might have paired admirably, as far as physical endurance was concerned, with the Bishop of Pretoria, who was stated to have officiated no less than five times on one Sunday, in camp, laager, and redoubt, despite the fact that his hearers were few, and their spiritual enthusiasm somewhat dormant. However, his lordship deserved much praise for the stalwart energy of his piety; and it was said that he carried through a midnight service on New Year's Eve successfully, despite the fact that the band and pipers of the Scots Fusiliers in the square immediately adjoining were ushering in

'Eighteen hundred and eighty-one' with all the musical ardour of brazen notes and skirling pipes, effecting serious collisions of 'Auld Lang Syne' with the 'Nunc Dimittis,' the first part of the former melody being repeated four times in succession, and slightly suggesting that 'Hogmanay Nicht' was not being celebrated without other stimulating influences besides those of Gaelic enthusiasm.

Another brush with the enemy at Six-mile Spruit took place on the 4th of January, and resulted in the Carabineers bringing in a prize in the shape of a 'stravagin' Kaffir, whom they grandiloquently styled a 'spy.' Previous to their return, some Mounted Infantry, under Lieutenant O'Grady, went out to support them. I accompanied him, but we could find neither friends nor enemies—the latter we eventually discovered moving off some three miles away—so, after an enjoyable ride and couple of hours' scouting, we returned to camp, very much improved in appetite and general condition. These brushes with the patrolling-parties were now things of constant occurrence, as reconnoitring positions was quite the order of the day, and night too, very often.

A foraging expedition was successfully carried out to a farm called 'The Willows,' some miles to the east of Pretoria, and thirteen waggons of produce, chiefly forage, safely carried to camp, the Transport Service working hard and fast in the loading up and carrying off the oat-sheaves and 'mealies,' destined for the benefit of our hard-worked horses. The day was hot, and the party of men on a look-out hill-top between

the farm and the camp, and who were keeping up a conversation with the latter by means of flag-signals, expressed considerable gratification when they received instructions to announce that the expedition had been successful, and the waggons and escort were on their way back.

These instructions I personally brought to them, and the prospect of coming down shortly from an exposed position, with no shelter and empty water-bottles, was hailed with loud acclaim, and a cheer given for the successful foragers. Presently the returning column arrived, and the 'look-out' party jumped on the mule-waggons and spread themselves out on the bags of mealies and bundles of forage, and all clattered safely into Pretoria, the only sign of the enemy being a small Boer patrol visible at a long distance beyond 'The Willows.'

We just returned to camp in time to witness the chief officer of Transport forcibly ejecting from his tent the regimental ram—a patriarch of the Southdown species, who was generally marched at the head of the Scots Fusiliers when on parade. The heat of the weather had evidently oppressed his ramship, and the tent of 'the Major' seemed to offer all the inducements of shade and luxurious ease, so in he went, and quietly disposed himself on the official shakedown; and great was the consternation, and both loud and deep the imprecations, of its owner when he discovered his bed thus occupied. And much that ancient mutton rued the fact that Transport officers carry long and heavy riding-boots on sinewy and supple limbs; and he

looked as though he was repenting his transgressions and seeking relief for his bruised spirit when, a few hours later, he was seen rubbing his quarters against the wheel of one of the nine-pounders at the west of the Garrison Square.

An event took place at this time which went to prove that all who had taken refuge under the British flag were not entirely loyal to its defence. It was the loss of upwards of seventy head of cattle. The authorities placed in the position of pound-master a person who, to use the mildest term, might be reasonably suspected of strong leanings to the side of the Boers; and though warned several times of this fact, with that superior wisdom, born of official tenacity, which refuses to admit an error, they persisted in retaining his services. The pound-kraal was a large enclosure, a couple of hundred yards below the camp of the Carabineers, and had been intended for a vegetable-garden for the garrison. It was enclosed with strong wire-fencing, and was the nightly receptacle of a large quantity of oxen, the meat supply of Pretoria and its defenders. During the night the twenty-two outer guards and ring of sentries were alarmed with the bellowing of the animals, who seemed to have burst the bonds of the pound-kraal, and were stampeding over the Veld. Daylight showed that the wire-fencing had been deliberately cut in several places; and on further examination it was found that seventy head of cattle were missing. The pound-master was dismissed, then arrested by the Provost-Marshal, and eventually released; the engineers built a brick wall

round the pound, the guards were doubled, reliable pound-masters appointed, and in fact everything done that should have been done before—all of which failed to bring back the seventy head of African bovines, a loss which might have been severely felt had the investment of Pretoria been prolonged an additional month beyond the time it lasted.

The first birth took place in camp a few days after New Year's Day, by which a Mr. Strauss became a happy father; and the notice of the event was duly heralded in the *News of the Camp*, under the title of 'New Music—The Wail of the Infant, by Strauss.' This example was followed immediately by the lesser animals, and the artillery stables witnessed an addition to their stock of popgun-pullers in the shape of a fine young foal. In both cases we were called on to editorially report a simultaneous bulletin from Doctor and Farrier-Major, to the effect of 'Mother and child doing as well as can be expected'—under canvas it may be assumed.

On the 6th January, at two in the morning, a column left the camp, consisting of the Carabineers, under Captain Sanctuary—poor D'Arcy, the Commandant, having had to relinquish the command through his wound; Nourse's Horse, under Captain A. W. Sampson, a fine young colonial, who had previously held an important Government appointment, and who now commanded the 'blue Puggarees' in place of Nourse, who was invalided; the 94th Mounted Infantry, under Lieutenant O'Grady; a couple of companies of the Royal Scots Fusiliers; about eighty

men of the Pretoria Rifles (Foot Volunteers); some Engineers, and a seven-pounder gun, accompanied by the Royal Artillery, under Lieutenant Hare, a young officer whose coolness in action and modest unaffected manners secured him a marked popularity in Pretoria.

As usual, we assembled in the Garrison Square, and having ridden up to Colonel Gildea's quarters, I found him enveloped in a long riding-cloak, just ready to start.

'Will you have a cup of tea?' he asked.

Replying to his thoughtful suggestion that I should be only too glad to eliminate the sleep from my eyes that my early rising, search for my horse, and the operation of saddling him up had failed in doing, I availed myself of his morning hospitality; and the fragrant beverage of the Chinaman drove some of the film from my eyesight, and cobwebs from my half-awakened brain.

Thinking it probable that serious work was contemplated, I jammed one of my holsters with a tin of Oxford sausage, and a soda-water bottle full of brandy, and the other contained half a dozen biscuits, a case of bullets, and a handsome Rigby revolver, of the newest pattern and latest improvements; so I felt that I was fairly victualled and not badly garrisoned. My Westley-Richards carbine I left in the waggon, and in its place I slung round my shoulders a field telescope and pair of glasses, and thus equipped followed the Colonel to the square where the column was forming.

I then became acquainted with our destination, which,

till then had been kept secret, and also the Colonel's plan of action. The position to be attacked was a laager some ten miles from Pretoria, erected in the rear of a rugged little mountain called the Zwart-kopje (Black Hill), and immediately adjoining a farm previously occupied by a Mr. Cockcroft, who had left his place and sought asylum beneath the English flag in Pretoria. It was the Colonel's intention, by sending the Carabineers forward by a road to the left, to secure a position on the farther side of the laager, and thus prevent the escape of its occupants in the event of his attack being successful.

We moved from the camp and through the town of Pretoria, and got well out on the 'Veld' road, the Carabineers leading with their scouts well ahead, and the Mounted Infantry following in their wake, the nine-pounder gun and mule-waggons, with Infantry and Foot Volunteers, trailing along behind them, the officers of Transport 'bossing' up the mule-drivers, to 'keep the touch' of the column. The Colonel rode down to the right, accompanied by the Adjutant, Lieutenant Chichester, and his escort; and I followed, as in duty bound. Not hearing the tramp of the column immediately after us, I rode back, and presently discovered them following the Carabineers, who were gaily working off to the road on the left, with the Mounted Infantry and whole column in their wake. A few words of explanation with Lieutenant O'Grady, the officer commanding the Mounted Infantry, had the desired effect of directing their inclination to the right.

And now the difficulty arose of finding the Colonel and escort, who were not to be heard, and certainly on this

darkest of nights were not to be seen. He must be down to the right was generally conceded, and on we went, leading the column through the pitchy darkness, now floundering into holes, now rising suddenly over ant-hills, or occasionally becoming dead-locked by boulder-stones, whose acquaintance was made too late to be avoided; and after this experience of 'trekking' over the 'Veld,' the indifferent path that did duty for a road to Middleburg was hailed with something akin to a strong sense of relief when at last we did strike into it. In about half an hour's time we discovered the Colonel and escort, who had halted for the arrival of the troops; and after some delay in crossing a few boggy patches and drifts of spruits, shortly before daybreak the head of the column halted at 'The Willows,' the farm from whence the day before we had successfully carried away thirteen waggon-loads of forage.

As morning dawned and the sun began to shake himself up, the Carabineers, with Captain Sanctuary leading them, could be seen riding boldly forward to take up the position previously arranged for them. Our halting-time was short; long enough, however, to secure a couple of bundles of forage for my horse, which, poor brute, had not much opportunity for subsequent gastronomic enjoyments. Presently a few puffs of white smoke, gradually extending into a broken circle, indicated that the Carabineers were engaged, and no time was lost in making a forward movement. Philosophers may write, prelates may argue, and poets may sing of the blessings of peace, but that man is a fighting animal there is no gainsaying; and the sight of these distant puffs of smoke, so surely

indicating that our comrades had commenced the engagement, acted like a spur on the main body, who came clattering down as fast as horses and mule-waggons could carry them—the lucky mounted fellows dashing ahead, and reaching the ground before their less fortunate brethren of the foot corps, who had to content themselves on their waggons and with the pace of their mules, who, however, never travelled faster than over the couple of miles that intervened between 'The Willows' and the Zwartkopje. Colonel Gildea rode down to the right of the kopje, and the nine-pounder and artillery, protected by a company of infantry with mounted ditto in reserve, took up a position from whence a few shells were tossed at the top of the little rugged mound where the puffs of smoke were visible. A party of mounted men were seen advancing towards this little kopje, and an order was heard to 'give them a shell; and the Royal Artillerists responded by skying one at them, which fortunately burst in mid-air high over their heads.

While the gun was being re-loaded and depressed to secure the range for a second shot, I rode down in front, dismounted, and, steadying my field-glass on my horse's saddle, discovered by its aid that the mounted enemy we were endeavouring to decimate were none other than a troop of the Pretoria Carabineers, and whose slouched hats and somewhat irregular formation made it an easy matter to mistake them for Boers at the distance and in the deceptive morning light.

It did not take me many seconds to jump on to my horse and gallop back with this striking piece of intelli-

gence; and I was not a particle too soon, for they were all ready, the gunner waiting the order to fire, and the sergeant-major serenely observing the proper sighting of the nine-pounder for the benefit of 'our boys' in the distance. I confess I felt a little warmed up, and roared out, 'Stop—don't fire!' with rather more authority of tone than the fact of being an attaché to the Commandant's staff might possibly warrant; but when the explanation followed that we had got our own men as targets, I venture to believe that I was heartily forgiven. An outcome of this incident was that during the remainder of the war the Carabineers and Nourse's Horse carried red and blue flags respectively, to denote their whereabouts in the field.

I immediately reported the occurrence to the Colonel, who ordered the gun to be trained on the Zwartkopje, which we now began to discover was the real place of defence, and which looked from the rocks and shrubs by which it was covered, and the thick orchard in the rear at its base, an ugly nut to crack even to minds entirely ignorant of military tactics and the art of attack and defence. Two companies of the Scots Fusiliers extended in skirmishing order, and attacked the left front face of the kopje; and Captain Sampson, with some of Nourse's men, dismounted, and thirty or forty of the Foot Volunteers worked up to the left, where the orchard and farmhouse was situated. A small river almost encircled the base of the kopje, forming a natural moat around this little fortress of nature; and the power of selection was evidently discreetly used when Cockcroft's farm was chosen as one of the circle of laagers investing Pretoria.

The artillery played away, but the cover afforded by the kopje was too good to admit of the fire being effectual; and the Boers kept up a fairly spirited reply from their points of vantage. The Colonel, who was all a fighting man, and whose blood was getting warmer the longer the attack lasted, rode down to within 400 yards of the base of the kopje; and following him, we came in for a fair share of attention from the marksmen above. In my unsophisticated heart I was desirous of not only preserving the life of the commanding officer, but the fact that my wife might at any moment become a widow was impressing itself upon me, and I ventured to mildly intimate that we were getting fairly into the line of fire.

'Oh, hang the line of fire!' replied the Colonel. 'Tell those Foot Volunteers to get forward;' a reference to some half-dozen gentlemen who evidently did not relish lead supplied in small or large quantities—one of whom seemed to have rather vague ideas as to which was the barrel and which the stock of his rifle.

While 'bossing' up some of these stragglers, the shots from the laager became lively, and being much closer, were consequently more interesting. It has quite a musical sound, that singing of a bullet; and as long as you can hear it making music, you may rest satisfied that it is not the particular one that has your corporeal frame destined as its billet. It is when it comes past you with a 'whit-sch' that you may deem your escape a lucky one, and that your visitor has been quite close enough to have enabled him to drop his card into your letter-box.

Having stirred up the stragglers, I rode up to where

the gun was posted, and learned that a white flag had been reported as having been hoisted on the left summit of the kopje, and that the Colonel, accompanied by Mr. Brooks and his mounted orderlies, had gone down to inquire the nature of the parley. So I rode after them as fast as my nag could carry me. The bugler had sounded the call to cease firing, which was immediately obeyed by the attacking Fusiliers and Artillery; but the Foot Volunteers on the other side of the kopje evidently did not understand its meaning, nor did the Carabineers on the mounds in the open, as both kept up a desultory fire—the former in the orchard, and the latter at a number of Boers who were riding away from the laager, and who probably were taking advantage of the flag being hoisted to make good their escape from a position that was evidently becoming positively sultry in its warmth.

There was an apparent lull on the left face of the kopje as I rode down to the edge of the river, and, under partial cover from its bank, worked my horse round to near the drift, or ford, where the Colonel was halted, Mr. Brooks a short distance behind, and a lance-corporal named Burns advancing with a white handkerchief tied to the head of a lance he carried. I could not discover at this time any white flag visible on the left side of the kopje, and felt somewhat anxious as Burns boldly advanced and called out in Dutch to the Boers thereon to 'Uit komm and praact' ('Come out and speak'). They didn't come out, but they spoke with a vengeance, answering by a discharge of several shots at the flag-bearer, followed by an additional contribution for the

benefit of the Colonel and the rest of us. They fortunately missed everyone, an evidence that at close range the Boer is not so steady a shot as at longer distances. I jumped my horse into the river, and taking cover from its farther bank, urged him through the stream until a foothold offered at a small cattle-drift, and, gaining the open, rejoined the Colonel, who, somewhat disgusted at so nearly being the victim of what looked like downright treachery, had 'let slip the dogs of war' again, and given the order to the Fusiliers to advance.

The cordon was now being tightly drawn round the kopje, by the Fusiliers on the one side, and the Volunteers on the other; and it was evident that those in possession were unmounted men, as their lucky comrades who owned chargers had made good their escape during the temporary lull in the action. Those remaining still kept up a dogged resistance, and the Colonel, whose patience was rapidly ebbing, gave the word to charge, the left wing of the Fusiliers having now touched the right one of the Volunteers. The charge was then sounded, and no sooner did the brazen notes of the bugle ring out, than the steel bayonets were seen glittering in the sun, and the Fusiliers advancing to the attack, their red coats showing in bold relief against the background of green; and it was at this juncture they suffered the chief loss they sustained. The sight of the cold steel appeared to have a determinate effect on the wavering opinions of the defenders of the kopje, for again a white emblem was unmistakably hoisted, and the order to 'Cease fire!' sounded by our buglers.

The Colonel rode down this time to the drift at the

back of the kopje and close to the farmhouse, the orchard affording cover in case of a renewal of his previous experience, and I kept close by his side; and as we crossed the drift, I could not refrain from saying:

'Take care they don't play us the same trick again, Colonel.'

But the Colonel was on guard this time, and planted some Foot Volunteers in the outbuildings of the farmhouse, some Engineers in a little hut farther on, and then giving a Captain of the Foot Volunteers the word to advance with a file of his men, we debouched into the open space in front of the farmstead, and there in full view we saw the waggons of the enemy, their oxen kraaled, and presently a spokesman from the party above descending with a very soiled white rag in his hand—the emblem of peace, but scarcely of purity.

They are certainly a most curious people, these Transvaal Dutch. Down came 'Mynheer,' without the smallest symptom of feeling of any kind, either fear, sorrow, regret, or dislike, and extending a brawny and not too clean paw to the Colonel commanding, addressed him as 'Kapitan' (Captain), and asked him in Dutch 'How he was?' A young Pretorian, Mr. Lys, who interpreted for the Colonel, interrogated the envoy, a number of other Boers showing themselves unarmed on the kopje. We ascended their little stronghold, and saw the red jackets of the Fusiliers crowning the ridge, having come up from the other side. The first thing that attracted my attention was a young Boer, evidently mortally wounded, and struggling in the agony of his death-throes, so I lifted his head, and poured a little brandy

down his throat; but he was beyond the power of all human aid, and in a few minutes his pain was over. He had his cartridges in a little leathern military pouch, all dabbled with his life's blood, and I loosened it from his belt to find that it had belonged to one of the 94th Regiment, and had in all probability been taken at the Honde River; so truly in this individual case Bronkhorst Spruit had been avenged. Another fine young Boer, broad-chested and powerful, was lying over a piece of boulder-stone just as he had fallen, a smile on his face and a bullet in his brain; and the excitement of the engagement over, I freely confess I sickened to see useful human lives sacrificed in a struggle which ought never to have taken place. The Boer Commandant, a big coarse man named Hans Botha, was lying severely wounded in no less than five places; his white shirt, to which he had stripped himself to fight more freely it is to be presumed, was bathed crimson with his blood, and his chances of recovery were reckoned small and few. Some men are like cats—you cannot kill them; and the Boer Commandant of the Zwartkopje Laager still lives to tell the story of the day when the 'rooi baatjes' mangled him with shot and shell. It was said that this man distinguished himself as a marksman in the attack on the 94th at Bronkhorst Spruit, never firing a shot without the result of killing or wounding his man. Gasping, faint, and groaning with pain, he now had an opportunity of feeling some of those pangs he little more than a fortnight before had been so instrumental in inflicting on the unsuspecting 94th fellows as they marched along to their untoward fate.

The Boer prisoners, some seventeen in number, were a very coarse lot of men, principally from the Waterberg district, north of the Transvaal, and all stated they had been 'commandeered' to fight; a statement which would in all probability have been made by all Boers who had the ill-fortune to be taken by the British forces. As we anticipated, they and their comrades who were killed and wounded on the kopje were horseless, all the mounted men having cleared out when the results of the action began to look ominous; and from what we then learned there had been a division of sentiment when the first flag of truce was exhibited, as to whether they should or should not surrender, their Commandant, though severely wounded desiring to fight to the last; hence the leaden reception we were accorded when the Colonel sent forward his orderly to parley with them. It was rather fortunate that they were dealing with the comparatively mild Britisher; and still more fortunate that the authorities seemed to feel desirous of gently chastising their erring children, or the white flag episode might, and would with any European Continental nation, have seen the orchard-trees at the Zwartkopje swaying down their boughs laden with the fruits of our success in the shape of its enterprising defenders. The Engineers now blew up with dynamite some six or seven Boer waggons, wasting fully an hour in the operation, and the oxen were yoked into four others; and with the wounded and prisoners we moved over the river to find our ambulances full, and the doctors busy at work attending to the wounded, of which we had a good many; the Fusiliers in their 'advance' and

'charge' having suffered the most. Two young Carabineers were killed, and a third met with his death-wound a little later; several were wounded more or less severely; and presently I met Captain Sampson of Nourse's Horse, with a great hole in his throat and a bullet in his shoulder.

'Why don't you go to an ambulance, captain?' said I.

'Oh, I'm all right,' he replied; 'give me a little help to get on my horse, as I can't use my arm;' and the brave fellow refused all assistance until Nature asserted herself, and absolute fainting being imminent, he consented to sit on the back of an ambulance-waggon.

'Tell Colonel Gildea,' said Sampson, 'that one of his men behaved uncommonly well, and helped me out under a severe fire when I was wounded;' and making little of his wounds, he turned and tried to cheer up the occupants of the ambulance, some of whom were not as badly injured as himself.

These young Colonial men possess the right stuff from which to construct soldiers. Combativeness is phrenologically prominent in South African youth, and a little experience soon polishes up their fighting qualities to the glossiest smoothness. Nor must the British soldier be forgotten, for he takes his punishment as well as any man in the world; and to see Tommy Atkins smoking his pipe, with the surgeon probing his leg for a bullet, is a sight not to be forgotten.

By ten o'clock the column was formed for the return to Pretoria; the rear covered by the Carabineers, who had given three lusty cheers for Captain Sanctuary who commanded them, Nourse's Horse and the Mounted Infantry doing the rest of the scouting. No sooner had

we started on the return journey when a dropping fire was heard in the rear, the mounted Boers, reinforced by others from the laagers adjoining, having returned to the devastated Zwartkopje, and inflamed with the sight of their waggons destroyed, were determined to have a parting shot at us. The Carabineers kept them well in hand; but the oxen in the waggons made our progress slow in the extreme, and it was anticipated that our return journey might be marked with more serious results than the morning's fray, an hypothesis quite within the range of probability. At one time I thought we would certainly be surrounded, as the enemy showed on the right and left rear, and a long strip of mountain to our left flank was seen to be occupied by them, and dropping shots at long range were continuously blazed away at us. A rocket battery opened on them, a company of Fusiliers were thrown out in skirmishing order, an order was given to hurry up the waggons and form a 'laager;' and the Transport officers had a lively time trying to keep the mule-waggoneers in hand, and not succeeding very brilliantly in their endeavours. A party of 100 mounted Boers were seen riding hard towards a 'poort' that opened on our road back; but they did not occupy the position, and at four in the afternoon we sighted the town and camp of Pretoria, most of us pretty well done up. Having been out from 1.30 a.m. till 4.30 the following evening was pretty hard work, and my horse could barely put one leg before the other as we came in sight of the town and met Sir Owen Lanyon, Colonel Bellairs, and the warlike Executive Council Brigade, who were

on the *qui vive* for our return; and who at one time of the day were so anxious about our safety, that all the available mounted men in camp were ready with horses saddled, and a nine-pounder limbered up, prepared to dash out to our aid in event of such a movement being necessary. I took a seat in the basket-carriage of a Pretorian resident who had come out to meet us, and who, laden with Captain Sampson and a wounded sergeant of Nourse's Horse, was now making his way in again. I towed my horse behind, and eventually entrusted him to my friend's intelligent Kaffir servant to take up to my quarters in the military camp. The woolly-headed son of Africa took him into the Convent Redoubt, and 'off-saddled' him there; and when eventually he did arrive at his right quarters, I found on examining my holster that my valuable revolver had been 'annexed' by some enterprising volunteer, who doubtless thought the increasing of his own armoury at the expense of mine was quite a legitimate transaction in 'the piping time' of war.

As I reached the entrance to the camp, an Hibernian lady—whose better-half, a Foot Volunteer, had been conspicuous by the absence of that dash which made the sons of Erin famous in Britain's battles when the Connaught Rangers' charge decided the day—made a rush at me, and in the richest of Clare brogues said:

'I beg yer pardon, but did ye see my man?'

Adopting her accent as nearly as possible, I replied:

'In troth an' I did, ma'am; wid his gun in one hand, and his bay'net in the other, chargin' the kopje, and the Boers "loopin" before him.'

'Ah, then,' said she in a modulated whisper, 'would ye take a tint of anything to dhrink?'

I declined, and pushed on to secure luxurious rest in my waggon; and when next I heard of the Irish lady's better-half, the description of whose valorous exploits I had given so freely, it was to learn that the unfortunate old fellow had been court-martialled for cowardice, dismissed from the corps he belonged to, and degraded to menial employment for the rest of the siege. I need not add that I gave his fair lady a wide berth afterwards.

The excitement in camp was very great during our absence, and people having relatives and friends amongst the combatants had rather an anxious time of it: and the women clustered outside the military lines and questioned the first-comers as to the safety of those in whom they were interested, and great was their evident relief when favourable replies were received to their numerous queries.

Burnt red with exposure to a blazing sun, worn out with the fatigue so long a day and so much saddlework produced, I scribbled a few hasty lines for the *Camp News*, just on the point of issuing from the press, and then, booted and spurred, tumbled into my waggon, too tired to even relieve myself of the field-glasses and telescope which had served me so usefully on more than one occasion during our 'fourteen hours out,' besides the particular one when the 'nine-pounder' threatened destruction to my gallant comrades of the Carabineers. What a luxury that deep sleep engendered of hard physical exercise truly is! and it required but few

seconds from the time I turned in, to carry my weary brain far away from scenes of blood and carnage, from moving incident and motionless death, from shout of success, or from moan of pain.

The day after the action at the Zwartkopje, the first military funerals were held in Pretoria, and the red-coated soldiers, whose avocation was war and its consequent risks, and the young volunteers who for the time being had adopted a similar hazard, were borne to their last home with all the honours conferred by martial pomp and power. The pipers in front played a Scottish lament, and wild and weird the skirl of the Highland pipes sounded as the procession halted near the military cemetery; and amidst the most intense quietude the comrades of bearded soldier and boy-volunteer shouldered their remains and bore them to their final resting-places, where the only *reveillé* likely to disturb their sleep will be that of the last trumpet, at which Revelation sayeth, 'the dead shall be raised incorruptible.'

A colour-sergeant of the Scots Fusiliers was one of the first to fall during the 'charge' at the Zwartkopje. Poor fellow, he was within a very few months of his twenty-one years' service, and had been painting the pictures of his fancy in the most vivid colours as to his intentions 'when the war was over' and 'he was going home.' Leading his file of men, he fell, shot through the chest; and now the red sand of the Transvaal, thrown over him by his brother-sergeants, hid all his hopes, fears, and aspirations.

Next him, a young Carabineer, who but a few weeks

before had been a clerk in the Pretoria Branch of the Standard Bank of South Africa, lay with a bullet through his heart—his young life ended in his nineteenth year. A comrade of the same age lay next him, and another in all the vigour of his manhood alongside. Some young privates of the Scots Fusiliers, who had succumbed to their wounds during the night, made up the quota of the killed; and I have a distinct recollection of getting into a waggon on the return from the Zwartkopje, in answer to his request to turn one of these poor fellows on to his back, in which position he fancied he would feel more at ease. I don't know why, I suppose it is the feeling generated by a common humanity, but I somehow seemed to feel a personal interest in this poor fellow, and the recollection of his words of thanks for the trifling office I had performed for him the evening before, brought his pale, distressed face quite vividly before me.

Strip war of the mantle of its glories and excitements, and it will disclose a gibbering ghost of pain, anxiety, grief, disappointment, and despair.

CHAPTER V.

EDITORS' QUARTERS — CHURCH PARADES — THE MAJOR AND THE INFIDELS — SENTINEL STORIES — THE ORDER OF THE BATH — PIQUET SKIRMISH — THE ATTACK ON ELANDSFONTEIN RIDGE.

THE Zwartkopje engagement, of which we published a lengthy description, gave quite a fillip to the circulation of the *News of the Camp*, and our editorial quarters became a central point of interest; in fact of gossips we had quite a plethora, and could well have dispensed with a few, which we occasionally did by the successful ruse of hinting that our next waggon neighbour was hospitable and his supply of 'square-face' gin inexhaustible. By this simple method we reduced our quota of hangers-on and increased in proportion that of our worthy Yorkshire would-be Zambesi lion-hunter. He certainly was what we pronounced him to be, quite too good-natured, and his travelling *confrère* obtained, as his name denoted, the *goodwill* of all around. A Mr. McIvor from New Zealand, and a *very civil* Civil Engineer from the same place named Maben, also helped to make things agreeable; and conversation political, social, fast, occasionally furious, and generally well sustained, travelled through the canvas awning that divided our editorial quarters from the next waggon,

and though sometimes agreeable enough when leisure permitted our joining the circle from whence it emanated, was a cruel foe to leaders on the situation, the mal-administration of ward-masters, the uses and abuses of departments, the battle, murder, and sudden death surrounding us, to say nothing of the poetical flights of fancy wherein we editorially soared, and with which the columns of the *News of the* (S)*Camp*,' as it was occasionally irreverently styled, might be said to be studded.

A near neighbour also was Captain Nourse, who with his *confrères*, Captain Sampson and Lieutenant Glynn, formed a charmed and charming circle, and I habitually called round each evening to the lines of 'Norse's 'Orses' to talk over the current events and possibilities for the future. Better fellows than the trio I speak of I do not want to meet, and all possessed the sterling qualities from which to construct successful soldiers. Conversing on the Church-parade Question, which was very mildly agitating the volunteers, but considerably moving the Bishop, who considered the parading of four men out of a troop of over a hundred strong as an evidence of a decided depression in that part of 'our boys'' craniums where 'faith' and 'veneration' are supposed to be, the following characteristic story was narrated when Major —— was in command at a position called Fort Weber, during the early campaign against Seccocœni. He paraded his forces, chiefly volunteers, the first Sunday they were in the fort for church service. Having a very limited supply of chaplains, the Major desired all Roman Catholics to fall out, his stock of

clergymen not including anyone in priest's orders. Next Sunday, in the hopes of being ordered also to 'fall out,' a number of ingenious volunteers handed in their persuasions as 'Infidels.' The Major drew up his line, and demurely gave the word of command, 'Infidels fall out!' whereupon some five-and-twenty of the boys obeyed, and, being re-formed, were addressed by him in steady complacent tones, he quietly observing: 'Of course, as you have no religious scruples, you can't object to working on Sunday. You will be told off in fatigue-parties to clean the camp.' The result of this order secured before the following Sunday as many converts to Christianity as there had been lapses into Infidelity previously, and the emissaries of Exeter Hall could scarcely boast as effective, rapid, and numerous a conversion.

We had plenty of incidents to keep us interested, daily skirmishes, patrolling-parties, visits to the hospitals, band promenades in the Garrison Square, occasionally polo and cricket—for, Boer or no Boer, young England and his colonial cousins will play the national game under all circumstances; and lastly, when, tired and weary, we sought the luxury of our trestle-beds, stretchers, or covered waggons to enjoy sleep, we had to encounter that interesting little creature called the lively flea — yea, and that same multiplied by myriads. In wet weather they seemed to be driven up from the sand, and at times it was next to impossible to get a wink of sleep until perhaps towards morning, when worn-out Nature asserted herself, and a short unrefreshing hour's nap would exhibit its results in a

haggard, woebegone face with red eyes, and a heavy stupid feeling about the head that even a bottle of soda with a dash of that celebrated 'square-face' from our next waggon neighbour could scarcely dispel. Blue-gum leaves and insect powder were at a premium, both being considered antidotes to the plague we were suffering from, and the stores were quickly emptied of the latter, and boughs and branches of the former were scattered through tent, waggon, and bungalow, and, speaking from personal experience, without the slightest effect.

Our nightly chain of sentinels came in for a fair share of work, and were occasionally a good deal chaffed. They certainly seemed to be unequally divided, for on one occasion on returning to camp from Fort Royal, where I had been enjoying the hospitality of the officer commanding, I had to answer the challenges of no less than half a dozen of them, whereas on the other or western side of the lines the services of one ring of posts was deemed sufficient. Sentry stories were innumerable. One of the best occurred outside the lines of the Carabineers, where a civilian who had been invested with the secret of the countersign word had forgotten exactly what it was, though he retained a vague notion of its application. Seeing some moving figure, the sentry, as in duty bound, challenged the object, receiving for reply:

'It's all right. I'm a friend.'

'Advance one, and give the countersign,' said the sentry.

'Yes—yes. What time is it?' replied the challenged one.

'The countersign, or I fire,' shouted the sentry.

'I'm not sure of the word, but it's one of them officers,' ejaculated the civilian; and as the word for the night was 'Adjutant,' the sentry took it for granted he had some inkling of the magic name with which to conjure the way through the camp and laager.

A couple of nights later the officer of the day was riding on 'grand rounds,' near where a ring of sentries from the Civil Guard had been posted, and was challenged by one of them at a respectable distance. The officer rode up, and the sentry threatened to fire.

'Grand rounds,' said the officer.

Sentry replied:

'Grand round of ammunition ready.'

'I'm the officer of the day,' roared the challenged one.

'Day be ——' (anathematized), uncivilly replied the Civil Guard. 'It's the officer of the night I'm on the look-out for.'

These and numerous other stories were set floating about the camp, and were to be met with in all channels of conversation, until at last the subject became tabooed in consequence of the evident want of interest it excited.

An incident occurred during the lull supervening after the fight at Zwartkopje, which, founded on fact, is really worth relating, and which secured for itself a prominent position in our journal under the title of 'The

Order of the Bath.' A certain gentleman, who had formerly held office under the old Dutch Republic, and against whom a marked animus was understood to be felt by the Boers and their leaders, was induced to accompany a friend to his house in the deserted town of Pretoria. When they arrived there, at the suggestion of this friend, the gentleman first referred to treated himself to the enjoyment of a bath—his acquaintance ostensibly preparing to follow suit. While he was emulating the ancient Romans in this salutary proceeding, two of his friend's Kaffir servants, evidently well-tutored in their lesson, rushed wildly in, and looking as pale as a Kaffir well can, exclaimed that the Boers were in the town, entering the houses and shooting everyone they found. The bather sprang from his ablutions, rushed from the house, and was fleeing rapidly to the camp, annihilating distance by his celerity of movement, when the stentorian voice of his friend roaring after him to come back, and not be such a hanged fool, induced him to stay his flight and return. Fortunately Pretoria resembled Coventry when Lady Godiva made her celebrated equestrian promenade through it. Its houses were in reality, as the latter only seemed, tenantless, and boiling with indignation, and none the worse from his open-air experience, the ex-Government servant returned to finish his toilet, and to heap imprecations upon his false friend's head, who had so gloriously sold him.

A more than ordinary piquet skirmish took place about a week after the Zwartkopje engagement; and coming off in the immediate vicinity of the camp,

roused its residents to quite a lively pitch of interest. The Government Auditor, who had constituted himself a sort of Commissary-General *pro tem.*, had gone out to a farm a mile or so from the western extremity of our lines, and taken with him a grass-cutting machine, a mule-waggon and span of mules, and a party of Kaffirs, for the purpose of bringing in some fresh-cut grass to eke out the not very plentiful allowance of forage supplied to our horses, who, from hard work and limited feeding, were beginning to assume very decided angularities of outline, and whose projections would have made tolerably good hat-racks or clothes-pegs. While engaged in his peaceful avocation of hay-making, the Auditor-General was surprised by a strong party of Boers; and, deserted by his Kaffirs, he took up the only other white man in the party on the crupper of his horse—a fine big brute some sixteen and a half hands high—and rode as hard as he could for the camp.

Meantime news had been flashed down by heliograph from one of the forts of the Boer raid, and in a twinkling all was bustle and preparation. The Carabineers, Mounted Infantry, and Nourse's Horse sallied out, and borrowing a steed from the piquet-lines of the last-named force, my own nag being invalided since the day at the Zwartkopje, I rode out to the fray. About half a mile outside the lines I met the Auditor, Mr. Kisch, looking very warm and happy, his charger smoking and foam-flecked, the double freight of solid humanity he was carrying evidently taking it out of him; so I drew rein and halted sufficiently long to

obtain in a few brief words his story of what had occurred; and borrowing the rifle and bandolier of his friend on the pillion behind, I rode after the Carabineers, whose advanced piquet had exchanged shots with the Boers, claiming to have tumbled a couple of them, and having themselves lost a horse killed and a sergeant and a trooper wounded. The enemy had got safely away, and triumphantly carried off the mule-waggon and its span of mules, and rendered the grass-cutting machine valuable as old iron to any enterprising marine-store dealer inclined to increase his stock.

The Carabineers were posted now on a height commanding a slight dip in the mountain-chain to the south of Pretoria, known as 'Quagga's Poort,' and distributed about amongst the stones and rocks I found them tolerably comfortable, and waiting patiently for their opportunity to arrive. Nourse's Horse and the Mounted Infantry dashed rapidly round the country, but without being able to head off the Boers, who got clear away, Government waggon mules and all.

We remained out for a couple of hours, and on returning found the western approach to the camp a veritable military display. Infantry on waggons, Artillery in position, the authorities, the staff, and the terrible Executive Council brigade all massed near a mud-patch, which was delusively called the Botanical Gardens—its claim to such designation being due to its being enclosed with an earthen wall, within whose limits a handful of shrubs sustained a precarious existence.

It was sad to think the wily Boers were so ignorant as to put miles of distance between themselves, their booty, and the imposing force drawn up at the west of the camp; and the display certainly suggested the very ancient maxim about locking the stable-door when the horse was stolen; but in this case the animals were only half-horses, belonging to that interesting hybrid race called mules. The Auditor, or 'Assistant Commissary-General' as he was called, came in for a fair share of chaff respecting his wrecked grass-cutter, and it was the standing joke of the day to ask him whether he had spiked the mowing-machine before retreating or not?

We became now the victims of false news brought in by natives, whose 'yarns,' invariably of a flattering character to the British arms, told of how a terrible fight at Standerton had ended disastrously for the enemy, or that the 'rooi baeljes' (red coats) were driving the Boers out of Potchefstroom at the point of the bayonet, or that Sir George Colley was marching on Heidelberg; statements which, regarded with suspicion by the few, were generally accepted and magnified in the retailing by the many. Though favoured with detailed translations of most of these Kaffir stories from the District Office, I hesitated in giving them place in the *News of the Camp*, or when published, it was with the reservation of stating the sources from whence they were obtained. My reasons for so doing were that I was inclined to the opinions of the sceptical band who believed that these dusky gentlemen who brought in such plausible information were

not only strangers to truth, but had been run through the circle of the Boer 'waacht' for the express purpose of throwing dust in our eyes, and the sequel proved that their stories were tissues of falsehood and entirely unreliable.

On the 15th January we made a reconnaissance in force over the country lying to the south of Pretoria; and on our return in the afternoon I learned that the Lady Superioress of the Catholic Convent had died. She had been ailing some little time, and no doubt her illness was materially increased by the anxiety occasioned in having her convent turned into a fort, and herself and her nuns obliged to live as best they could within the precincts of their little church. She was sister to Bishop Jolivet, a Catholic prelate of French extraction, and who at this time was oscillating between the Free State and Natal, in the vain hope of being permitted by the Boer leaders to pass through to Pretoria.

An eventful day was the 16th January, when one of the most interesting engagements fought near Pretoria took place. It was generally known amongst a select circle who had the confidence of the Commandant, that a column would leave early in the morning to attack a Boer laager, the position of which was kept profoundly secret. Having been warned, I made my usual commissariat and other preparations, obtained a revolver from the quartermaster of the Scots Fusiliers, who, dear little red-tape-strangled fellow, could only grant my request when a duly margined foolscap-sheeted requisition had been presented, recommended and signed

by the Commandant, considered by the D.A.A.G., reconsidered by somebody else, advised by Deputy Thingamy, ordered by Assistant Something, and finally granted as a loan, the borrower to be responsible for its value as estimated by the Ordnance Department, with the privilege of paying up and looking pleasant should the fortunes of an engagement, or other mischance, leave him minus his shooting-iron, but with the satisfaction of possessing a whole skin in which to report its loss. Never mind, quartermaster; you are such a dear little fellow I forgive you. I know it is not your fault, and I fancy you have a pretty fair idea of how to appraise, without any suggestions from me, the full value of red-tape and pipe-clay; but to the untrained mind in matters of this particular kind, it doesn't seem a particularly gracious way of stimulating a desire for serving her Majesty, nor is it calculated *pour encourager les autres.*

At three o'clock in the morning Lieutenant Glynn roused me, and saddling up an old 'salted' horse of the colour called 'flea-bitten,' which in lieu of my still invalided brute I had borrowed from Nourse's piquet-lines, I repaired to the Commandant's quarters and Garrison Square, to find the latter full of waggons, mule-teams, infantry mounted and otherwise, Foot Volunteers from the Convent Redoubt, drivers, Transport officers high in oath and loud in voice, Carabineers and Nourse's Horse assembling, guns limbered up, artillerymen bustling around, and all the men provided with full water-bottles and ration-bags, it being conceded that the British soldier fights better on a good honest meal than on an empty stomach.

Just as the sun was wakening up and giving his first yawn, the Carabineers, under Captain Sanctuary, dashed out of the camp in a westerly direction, while the columns, waggons, artillery, foot soldiers, and volunteers, headed off the other way, through the town of Pretoria, on the farther side of which the noise of a series of explosions resounded on the morning air. This movement and the explosions, which were the results of some dynamite experiments of the Engineers, were ruses to draw the Boers from the laagers at the north, south, and east of Pretoria to the opposite side of our projected point of attack; and they partially succeeded, as we afterwards learned. Colonel Gildea, Adjutant Chichester, and Mr. Lys, with the usual escort of the lance-corporal and three Mounted Infantry men, dashed out over the 'Veld' in the wake of the Carabineers, who were well advanced ahead, scouting the country to the left, whilst Nourse's Horse did similar duty to the right. Accompanying the Colonel, I put spurs into my old 'flea-bitten' horse, whose forte was evidently more in staying-power than fleetness. The scouts ahead were now out of sight, having passed over the rolling ground, and our little party kept cantering on; the head of the column now returning from its detour, and visible far in our rear, were just debouching from the town of Pretoria on to the 'Veld' track, that we called from courtesy a road. The morning was bright, and the fresh atmosphere and brilliant sunshine accorded but ill with the mission of destruction upon which we were engaged. Springboks, alarmed from their resting-places in the long grass, went bounding

away, their white sides glistening in the morning's rays; while the disturbed 'pau,' or African wild-turkey, and occasionally coveys of partridges, suggested more agreeable subjects for powder and shot than the Boers awaiting us.

The country ahead was very undulating, and a little to the right lay a long ridge of mountains over a farm called Elandsfontein. Below, to the left extremity of this ridge, appeared a green mound, and in the kloof lying between this elevation and the lengthened strip above it was placed, as we had previously learned, the Boer laager. We were now quite seven miles from the camp, and while reconnoitring the neighbourhood, an orderly from Nourse's Horse galloped up with a report to Colonel Gildea that they had discovered a number of the enemy occupying a strong position on the slope of Elandsfontein Ridge.

'How many of them are there, do you think?' said the Colonel.

'About a hundred and fifty on the ridge, sir,' replied the orderly. 'We cannot see the laager; it lies in behind the kloof. The main body are probably there; we could see a clump of their horses, sir.'

On learning this, Colonel Gildea ordered the column, which had halted on the road about a mile and a half behind us, to advance, which they did rapidly, being well 'bossed up' by a Major of the Transport Department, whose powerful adjurations had the effect of evolving system out of chaos and inducing the mule-drivers to preserve some slight respect for order in their movements. The Foot Volunteers took up a strong

position on a rough, rocky kopje; the waggons were laagered near at hand, the mules driven inside, and a seven-pounder gun, worked by the bandsmen of the Scots Fusiliers, placed in position in front. Sanctuary and his Carabineers seized an eminence which faced and commanded the defile known as 'Quagga's Poort,' and a neck on the mountain-chain above it; while Nourse's Horse, with young Glynn, moved down to the right of the ridge over Elandsfontein, and, about three quarters of a mile from its spur, ascended its heights to a point where a considerable bulge, or rise, gave them a good commanding position; and one of their blue flags was fairly planted, as a token that there they were, and there they would remain, as a great French marshal said on a celebrated occasion. The two nine-pounder guns, with the artillery, and supported by infantry of the 94th and Scots Fusiliers, were advanced to attack the spur and front of the ridge.

Where the incline of this spur commenced there was erected a rough stone kraal. Another similar one was placed about a hundred yards to the right; and farther up again was a small wall and sort of schanze, a series of the latter extending along the ridge in the direction of the mound where Nourse's Horse had secured themselves, and from which a party of them, about twenty-five in number, could be seen advancing. They had not advanced many yards when the first shots of the engagement were fired, the Boers on the ridge giving the 'blue Puggarees' to understand that their advance was not to be a mere promenade. In a moment they were fairly at it, and with puffs of smoke and the rattle

of rifles the scene became quite animated; Nourse's men, who were easily distinguishable by their white ration-bags and belts, working cautiously along, taking cover at every step, and making the most of each projection or piece of stone that offered the smallest shelter, from behind which they kept up a spirited fire on the Boers. This fire was returned in kind with a fair amount of interest, as the party attacking was numerically small, and the ridge held by a pretty strong force, whose heads and occasionally half-length figures were clearly defined against the sky-line.

No attack was made on the front of the ridge until some ten minutes had elapsed from the advance of Glynn and his men, when, however, one of the nine-pounders began to speak, and endeavoured to communicate, in ten seconds by the time-fuse, with the kraal at the right end of the ridge. I steadied my field-glass to watch the result of the shot, which fell short of its mark. But its effect was peculiar. The upper portion of the face of the ridge seemed alive, as the Boers, who had been ensconced behind its rough boulder-stones, crawled out and, as quick as legs and hands could carry them, scrambled over the brow of the ridge into the kraals and schanzes they had erected, and behind which they lay close. The way in which they suddenly darted out from where a moment before nothing but stones was apparently visible, resembled exactly a swarm of immense rock-rabbits; and the celerity with which they disappeared into hiding assisted the mind in forming this idea.

It was about eight o'clock when the preliminary shell was discharged, and during the next twenty minutes

the artillery practised away without much effect, except that of keeping the attention of the defenders of the kraals and schanzes while Nourse's men were advancing from left to right, skirmishing admirably, and pushing the Boers along the ridge foot by foot, and gradually carrying about two-thirds of its length.

A move was now made. The guns advanced closer, and a brace of companies of infantry extended in skirmishing order in the valley at the front, and bearing to the left of the spur of the ridge, where, taking advantage of any cover afforded by a few stones or clumps of grass, they kept up a lively fusillade on the enemy above, who, tolerably secure behind their kraal-walls, schanzes, and stones, refused to be silenced by either artillery or musketry, and replied by a determined and occasionally particularly warm fire in return.

Colonel Gildea rode down to where the infantry were extended, and I accompanied him. Having dismounted, we gave our horses in charge to the mounted orderlies, and threaded our way through the skirmishers to the officer commanding them. While the Colonel was engaged examining the heights above, I crept down amongst the infantry, who, lying twelve or fifteen paces apart, were blazing away at the ridge with the determination of emptying their cartridge-pouches, even supposing they didn't hit any of the enemy; and the recipients of their favours were returning their compliments in ounces of lead; but being better marksmen, their fire showed better direction, and was at times unpleasantly close. Here I discovered the disadvantage of wearing a buff-coloured helmet for, lying in the grass with my field-

telescope resting on a piece of stone, and engaged in the peaceful occupation of observing the progress of the fight and taking a few notes in my memorandum-book for the benefit of the *News of the Camp*, I found myself the recipient of quite a number of leaden attentions from my Boer friends; and during the whole time I remained in this particular spot, some fifty minutes in all, continued to receive at intervals contributions from the kraal above. Whenever the fire on our side slackened, I could distinctly see the Boers taking a look-out, their dopper-hats rising slowly and steadily over the edge of the wall, followed by their heads and shoulders, until the cracking of a few rifles or the screech of a shell induced them to seek shelter again, which they did in an equally tardy and methodic manner. I was trying to work out the why and the wherefore of their particular attentions to myself, and my deliberations were quickened by a bullet flattening itself on the face of the friendly stone whereon my telescope was resting, and it suddenly dawned upon me that the buff helmet I was wearing was so like that of the skirmishers on my right and left, the infantry having daubed their white helmets with mud to deaden their colour, that it was the hat, and not its wearer, that was forming a target for the lynx-eyed Boer marksmen. Having had striking evidence on my temporary telescope-stand of their evil intentions, I thought it wise to move from a position that was to say the least uncomfortable; and it required some resolution to do so, as I knew that the minute I rose out of the grass I should hear from them, and that, too, with my full figure to pot at, and my range fully

secured. Screwing up my nerves, I rose and looked for the Colonel and his following, but could not at first discover him or them, until presently I saw the spear-head and pennon of Burns, the corporal of the escort, away off to the right of the ridge, below the point where Nourse's Horse had first planted their flag. This was vastly pleasant—fully a mile to tramp on foot, my horse having been taken away by the orderly who had him in charge; a scorching sun overhead, and a vigilant party of Boer marksmen amusing themselves with pot-shots from above while I plodded along, my flea-bitten charger meanwhile grazing with evident satisfaction to himself, and in perfect unconcern for the safety of his rider, close in the rear of the clump of orderlies denoting the Colonel's whereabouts. Well, thought I, when I came to the Cape to travel with 'a show through Southern Africa,' I didn't bargain that it should take the form of a peripatetic rifle-shooting gallery, with the proprietor as bell-target, or the Jack-in-the-box who springs up responsive to a 'bull's-eye.'

It was nearly ten o'clock, and the Artillery had suspended their efforts, rendering all the bolder the occupants of the end of the ridge, to which point they had been driven by the attack of Nourse's handful of 'blue Puggarees,' who, distinctly visible, could be seen cracking away; a prominent figure being Glynn standing up on the near side of the brow firing down into the laager in the kloof below. After a march of a full mile I got up to an ambulance, and there found my journalistic *confrère*, Deecker, who was combining the elements of wounding and healing in an ingenious

manner with a Martini Henry rifle and a roll of lint, taking a pot-shot at the enemy and assisting the doctor alternately. A little farther on I secured my 'flea-bitten' 'salted' horse, and rejoined Colonel Gildea, who I found full of fight, preparing to follow up the success of Nourse's men who were now within a couple of hundred yards of the kraals and laager, to support whom the Scots Fusiliers and 94th contingent were being brought round, and a rocket battery and a seven-pounder gun dragged up the ridge to a slightly rising ground on the top and some distance in the rear of Glynn's party. The rocket battery and seven-pounder were in the act of being hauled up the ridge by the aid of strong ropes and sinewy muscles, when our attention was attracted to a nek in the southern mountain-chain near the Quagga's Poort, far off to our left rear, over which a large body of mounted Boers were descending in Indian file, the noses and tails of their horses touching each other, looking like a great serpent unwinding its folds as they slowly moved down the slope and deployed in the valley beneath. These were the supports whom the wily lure of the dynamite explosions had drawn off to the eastern side of Pretoria, and who now, after learning the real facts of the case, had loyally returned to succour their friends in need on Elandsfontein ridge. The first batch of them must have numbered over two hundred, and were followed shortly after by about eighty more, or possibly a trifle over that number. I counted seventy-eight, and may have been a dozen or so out in my numeration. Rather unfortunately, some little time before this new addition to the combatants

put in an appearance, Captain Sanctuary and his Carabineers had been ordered to the support of the 94th Mounted Infantry, who, extended to the left front, were rather warmly engaged with a number of Boers who had cleared out of the ridge and laager beneath and got into the open ground, where, from strips of bush and other effective cover, they were making things generally lively for their opponents.

This withdrawal of the Carabineers from the hill opposite the nek was unfortunate, as it opened the gates to the succouring force from the southern laagers of the enemy, the number of Carabineers left to hold it being quite inadequate, and outnumbered by the Boers now crossing the nek by probably twenty to one. It is needless to say that when the Carabineers were sent to support the Mounted Infantry no sign or intelligence had been received of the advancing Boers, who now, extending in the valley, were beginning to look a formidable contingent. Attention had hardly been directed to the appearance of the Boer reinforcements when Colonel Bellairs, C.B., accompanied by his aide-de-camp, arrived at the base of the ridge where Colonel Gildea and his staff were assembled, and having expressed a very pronounced opinion that the game of taking the remnant of the ridge was not worth the risk to life it would entail, the latter not over-cheerfully ordered the attacking party to retire to the ground occupied by the supports and Artillery. This was carried out, though rather reluctantly it must be confessed, by all engaged, and more especially by the men of Nourse's Horse, to whom retiring meant more serious danger than going

The Attack at Elandsfontein Ridge.

forward and clearing off the few Boers who now remained from the spur of the ridge. The Artillery now opened fire, shelling the Boer reinforcements, who were to be seen galloping in numbers in the direction of Elandsfontein, making with top speed for the cover of some intervening elevated ground, and scattering like the wind when the artillery-practice made their course a dangerous one. The Boers on the spur at Elandsfontein, emboldened by the retiring of the attacking party, now came out from their cover and potted away indefatigably, Nourse's Horse being a pet aversion, no doubt a result of the previous success they had exhibited in dislodging its defenders from the ridge. The seven-pounder gun carried on a mule-waggon, well worked and creditably handled by the bandsmen of the Scots Fusiliers, did something to secure a bloodless retirement for the 'blue Puggarees,' who—minus one man killed and three or four wounded, the latter all brought down and carefully looked after—came up covering the left rear and bearing their blushing honours thick upon them. One fellow, a Swiss with an excellent eye to horseflesh, captured four Boer horses, having first disposed of the men in charge; and was now to be seen riding up with a brace of led steeds on either side of his own, looking quite equestrianly spectacular, and but for the absence of the spangles, might have been taken for the gentleman who rides the five horses in the circus ring.

A large party of Foot Volunteers were posted on a rise of broken ground immediately in front of which the Artillery had taken up position, and the hum of satisfaction amounting almost to a roar of delight that went

up from their ranks as the shells were sent skying in the direction of the enemy, evidenced their freedom from the restraint of their more regular brethren in arms. It was their first day out, and there was a newness in the thing to many of them. A few weeks' previous experience, and having been out at everything in the way of fighting which had taken place around Pretoria, rendered the Mounted Volunteers quite *blasé*, and they looked somewhat pityingly on their dismounted comrades' loudly-expressed sentiments with quite a smoke-begrimed self-satisfaction which was not a little amusing.

Very little damage appeared to be done by this loudly-applauded shell-practice, as the Boers spread rapidly over the ground and sought the shelter of its undulations; and skirmishing well at long-distance range, kept up a sputtering and intermittent firing, which however was, fortunately for us, generally ineffective.

The Mounted Infantry and Carabineers covered the centre and left face of the column which was now being formed to return to Pretoria, with Nourse's Horse on the right front and flank.

Many of the Boer supports having successfully run the gauntlet of the shell-fire, found their way round to their fellow-comrades near Elandsfontein, with whom they made common cause, and some very pretty skirmishing was the result.

As the column was about returning, it was discovered that two Fusiliers and a '94th' man were missing; and the former it was believed were lying wounded on the ground at the base of Elandsfontein Ridge, where I had previously

had the privilege of discovering the magnetic attractions possessed by a buff helmet for leaden particles. Why they were not removed or attended to when the infantry were ordered up to support Nourse's men on the ridge is one of those things that could bear some explanation; but the fact becoming known of their whereabouts, induced a couple of their comrades to gallantly risk their lives to bring them in. These were two Irish lads—a Lance-corporal Murray of the 94th Regiment, and a young trooper named Danaher of the Mounted Troop—Nourse's Horse. For fully five hundred yards in front of our fighting line these two young soldiers advanced to where their wounded comrades were lying, exposed all the time to the fire of the Boers, not only from the spur of the ridge, but from its face and base to which they had debouched on the withdrawal of our attack. On went the gallant pair, and safely reached the wounded men, to find one—the poor fellow whose humour had suggested the torpedo notice-board as an additional safeguard to my editorial quarters—beyond human aid, and the other seriously wounded in the head. Danaher took the latter by the legs and Murray raised his head and arms, and thus burdened they were moving back to our line, when a too well-directed shot struck the lance-corporal in the back, and he fell alongside the comrade for whom he had risked, and as we then thought forfeited, his life. Danaher turned and fired a few shots over his prostrate companions, and then gathering up their rifles as well as his own, marched coolly back, to receive the praises of all who witnessed his plucky adventure.

I had the privilege of subsequently detailing to Colonel Gildea the behaviour of Danaher and Murray, and referring particularly to it in a description of the engagement in our *News of the Camp;* and their conduct, specially reported on by their respective commanding officers, has since received that most coveted honour of a brave soldier, the badge 'For Valour' embodied in the Victoria Cross, Murray having been personally invested with it by her Majesty herself.

At a little after eleven o'clock the column began to slowly move off to Pretoria, all the mounted men and Artillery covering their retirement; Colonel Bellairs and Colonel Gildea remaining to direct the movements of our fringe of horsemen, who now, extended round both flanks and rear, were cracking away at the Boers. The latter, having waited patiently for their innings, seemed desirous of scoring as heavily as possible. They certainly did their best to harass our return, and it must be conceded, as skirmishers, showed to advantage both by the quickness of their movements and the perception they exhibited in securing the cover of rising ground, clumps of stones, strips of bush, anything and everything that offered shelter to themselves and vantage-ground from which to send their long-range shots at us. They kept at a respectable distance, however, rarely coming within 700 yards, and the Artillery appeared to be quite unnecessarily engaged hurling shells at little clumps where sometimes a puff of smoke denoted that a solitary skirmisher was concealed. In fact, the clumps of bushes and rocky rises must have suffered considerably from the 130 shells it is said were

hurtled through the air during the day of the attack on Elandsfontein Ridge, while the wily Boer smiled grimly in his sleeve at the impotent strength of the Artillery arm when pitted against Mounted Infantry, such as they in reality are, and skirmishing as they can in the open 'Veld' of Southern Africa.

Troops and volunteers were somewhat disgusted at being permitted to only half do the work for which they went out, a feeling that was very generally expressed by Nourse's Horse, who, having secured the fighting honours of the day, considered they had special reason to grumble at being despoiled of the fruits of their success.

I did not find the Colonel in the most affable temper as we rode in, but he was greatly pleased with the 'blue Puggarees' of Nourse, a sentiment to which he gave vent in a flattering garrison order; and when Captain Sampson came round in the evening, with a requisition for his signature on behalf of his corps, he received the reply:

'For Nourse's Horse? I'll sign anything for Nourse's Horse,' in evident appreciation of their services on the ridge, the high point of which was henceforth known as Nourse's Hill.

The last shots of the skirmishers were exchanged at two o'clock in the afternoon, near the Quagga's Poort, and were sufficiently well directed to sometimes raise the dust under our horses' feet; but by three we were safely back in the camp, where I learned that the Boers had made a demonstration at its eastern approaches, that Captain Campbell at Fort Royal distinguished himself

as an artillerist, and Sir Owen Lanyon and all the mounted men left in camp had been out to have a look at the enemy, potting a brace of them, who, I further learned, were carried away by their comrades.

Our casualties were remarkably small, considering that we were more or less under fire for upwards of six hours; but to counterbalance this gratifying reflection was the decidedly unpleasant one that some of our men had been left dead, and probably dying, below the ridge at Elandsfontein; and, as far as I could ever learn, no effort, save the individual ones of Corporal Murray and Trooper Danaher, had been made to bring them away when the retirement was made general. This was evidently felt to be the sorest disappointment in the engagement, involving as it did a sort of point of honour; and expressions of dissatisfaction at having been brought away when success was all but achieved, and the ridge and laager in our hands, went rumbling like incipient thunder from the tents of all arms engaged. 'Rooi baatje' ('red coat'), artilleryman, or blue and red Puggaree, seemed to vie with one another in the depth of their growls; and when a flag-of-truce-bearer came in next day to say that if we sent out an ambulance we could remove the wounded men to camp, the feeling deepened, and an inclination to use more than the ordinary amount of imprecations in general conversation seemed to obtain as a sequel to the tardily-obeyed order of retirement from Elandsfontein Ridge.

I was pretty well exhausted by the time I secured the friendly shelter of my waggon, having been out nearly twelve hours, most of which had been spent in the

saddle, the Colonel having drawn more than his v upon me to carry orders for him during the day, satisfactory performance of which he most cord acknowledged in his official report of the engagei and the despatches published in the Governi *Gazette.*

My 'flea-bitten' horse showed that his stamina good, if his appearance and speed were deficien elegance and fleetness, and returned to camp very n fresher than his rider, none the worse of the d outing. Having had a good roll and a drink, I turned him to the picket-line, where I last beheld enjoying a bundle of forage with all the app born of hard work and conscientious performanc duty.

CHAPTER VI.

: CAMP LIFE—ARRIVAL OF DACOMB—COURT-MARTIAL STORIES
DITING WORK—A SKIRMISH AT THE WONDERBOOMPOORT—
ICAN SHOWERS—HOW I DINED WITH 'HIS EXCELLENCY'—A
MENADE CONCERT—A LOOK AT THE DERDEPOORT—HORSE
KNESS—FLAG OF TRUCE ARRIVAL—NEWS OF 'LAING'S NEK'
ERSE—THE ACTION AT THE RED HOUSE KRAAL.

EELING of greater security began to pervade the pants of the camp and laagers of Pretoria, and dis- ed itself in many and various ways, not the least ing of which was the resumption of amusement- ing and mild forms of business; a few hard-headed keepers opening their places in town for an hour or daily, and disposing of what stock the Government not 'commandeered' at decidedly remunerative s. Half-a-crown and three shillings each might be idered a profitable figure at which to clear out ns of tins of lobster, salmon, jams, and the hundred one other forms that preserved food takes and bits itself in when piled on the shelves of the 'up- try' storekeeper; while a similar price would enable to secure for your horse a secreted bundle of forage h had escaped the lynx-eyed searchers of the Com- ariat Department, and been carefully hidden away,

in the happy hope of eventually realizing a famine price.

The advertising columns of the *News of the Camp* also afforded proof of this generally improved state of public feeling, containing as they did notices of the re-opening for an hour daily of the two banking companies who had previously done dusiness in the town of Pretoria, and whose advertisements, blazoned forth in the columns of the little journal, notified that the money-changers would occupy their temples as follows:

THE STANDARD BANK OF B. S. A. (LIMITED) will, until further notice, be Open Daily, from TEN TO ELEVEN O'CLOCK, at the hut occupied by the Commandant.—R. W. J. JOHNSTON, Manager.—Camp, Pretoria, 15th Jan., 1881.

Below which, in still bolder type, was heralded the announcement that

THE CAPE COMMERCIAL BANK will be open at the Military Camp, near the GARRISON OFFICE, from ELEVEN TO TWELVE O'CLOCK daily.—WM. HARSANT, Manager.

The auction of effects of deceased volunteers, as well as the notices of their deaths, formed the saddest column of our announcements, with heavy leads, and black lines, stood out in strong relief, directing immediate attention to the fact that the King of Terrors had established himself in our midst, and was determined to make his presence seen and felt.

Scholastic notices, 'Lost' and 'Found' announcements, also held prominent positions in our columns; and one enterprising storekeeper continued to advertise that a certain late employé was not authorized to any longer

collect accounts on his behalf, a statement which might, under the circumstances, have been fairly deemed superfluous, inasmuch as nobody seemed at all anxious to discharge any of the responsibilities they had incurred previous to the suspension of civil law, but rather to regard it as a merciful interposition of Providence to enable them to keep their pockets securely buttoned up.

But possibly the most utterly ludicrous incident occurring about this time was the issuing of the Government *Gazette*, intended for circulation throughout the Transvaal, and in which magistrates, field-cornets, police, and others were warned that 'Jim,' a Kaffir, was wanted for murder, and to use all diligence, etc., in bringing the aforesaid offender to justice, in virtue of a warrant duly signed, etc. When it is remembered that the circulation of the *Gazette* was limited to the camp of Pretoria, and that martial law had superseded that of civil authority, anything more thoroughly ridiculous than the Government *Gazette* notices could scarcely be imagined.

My *confrère* and myself were tolerably comfortable; and a little after daybreak each morning a Kaffir servant, who rejoiced in the metallic name of 'Sixpence,' brought us cups of coffee for our internal comfort, followed by buckets of water for our sponge bath; and while sipping the former, or enjoying the refreshing effects of the latter, we descanted upon our experiences, and commiserated each other on the terrible hardships we were undergoing; or when the night promised to be a fine one, I occasionally slung a net-hammock under our primitive awning from a stump to the hind-wheel

of my waggon, and, after enjoying a tranquil night's rest, would gaze through the slit of the bell-tent at my *confrère* reluctantly wakening up—the noise of the stirring camp having disturbed him from his slumbers—and exclaim :

'Fearful thing a siege, isn't it, Deecker ?' receiving for reply :

'Terrible, terrible. Where's that confounded nigger with the coffee ?'

Yells for 'Sixpence' would result in a guttural 'Yah, Baas—yah, Baas!' as the Kaffir, who possessed a pair of the blackest rolling eyes that ever were set within a woolly head, responded.

'News ! News ! News ! A white man in with messages from Sir George Colley!' This I found was the topic of morning conversation on the 21st January, when, after doing justice to 'Sixpences' bucket of 'Amanzie' (water), I strode up to the Garrison Office to learn the glad tidings, or as much of them as I could manage to extract from somewhat reticent officialism.

Next day, the anniversary of the fatal disaster at Isandhlwana, in the Zulu War, I was permitted to give to the world—our world, limited to camp, laager and redoubt—the gratifying intelligence that the British Lion had swished his tail on hearing of 'Bronkhorst Spruit,' and that infantry, cavalry and artillery were being forwarded in all the hot haste of an anxious Government bent on making reparation for its former short-sightedness. Camp residents walked about with their noses elevated in the air, a feeling of pity for the

enemy, to be shortly exterminated, being their now self-satisfied idea; and he who suggested that even the stupendous addition to the British forces in Natal of a brace of infantry and cavalry regiments, together with the same number of batteries of artillery, might possibly be insufficient for the purpose of relieving the garrisons of the Transvaal and securing order therein, was deemed, if not a positive traitor, certainly a Boer sympathizer in disguise, whose real feelings were covered with the flimsiest veil of apparent loyalty.

Our quills were driven rapidly in the editorial quarters at this time, and a doctors' strike, a mild mutiny in one of the Foot Volunteer companies, skirmishes, reports, martial law, markets for the camp, ward-master's delinquencies, and other equally absorbing topics, were dilated upon in the tri-weekly thunderbolt issuing from that portion of the military lines now known as 'Printing House Square.'

A week after the arrival of Dacomb, the messenger who brought Sir George Colley's despatches, and who, by-the-way, had come up *viâ* the Diamond Fields, reliable information arrived from Rustenburg and a few more of the Transvaal garrisons, and we learned with feelings of relief that our comrades in arms still held their own, though in every case closely invested by the Boers.

Feeling like the Irishman at Donnybrook, 'blue mouldy for want of a batin,' I gladly gave the order to my Cape-boy, a semi-Hottentot I had brought as a groom from Natal, to saddle up a nag from Nourse'e lines, to enable me to go out with a column intended to

reconnoitre and possibly attack the Boers at a position called the Wonderboompoort, from which they continually tried to harass our mounted men guarding the cattle—our rations *en bloc*—when grazing in that vicinity.

While riding out of the Garrison Square, I encountered Sir Owen Lanyon's private secretary, who conveyed from his Excellency a polite intimation that he dined that evening at seven, and that if I returned intact before that hour, he would be happy to provide me with what Ingoldsby calls 'a greasy chin.' Accepting Sir Owen's invitation, with the reservation of 'Boers permitting,' I galloped after the Colonel, and in about an hour and a half's time we had got into position in front of the Wonderboompoort—a cleft in the rugged mountain-range of the Magaliesberg, lying to the north of Pretoria. A fearfully strong position that 'poort,' through which the road defiles; on either hand the mountain-sides, cleft as with a giant's knife, rise steep, rugged, and inaccessible. The rocks jut out, and clinging to their sides are festoons of wiry creepers; from the interstices of the stones clumps of bush and small trees project; whilst up and down, in and out, I have seen monkeys and baboons springing to and fro in hundreds. It was said in camp that a young officer on cattle-guard duty mistook these quadrumanous gentry for the legions of the enemy, and had a message heliographed in to beware of an impending attack, the Boers being visible in force on the cliffs above the 'poort.'

This may or may not be true, but I remember well

on one occasion accompanying Glynn and a party of Nourse's Horse to this particular ground, and being ordered by the officer in command to reconnoitre a party of the enemy seen by him in a valley some 2,000 yards away. And well I remember how cautiously we advanced to the brow of the rising ground, and dismounting, crawled, rifle in hand, onward to where we should fairly have them in view and range. And when with our fifteen or twenty men extended in skirmishing line, their Martinis gripped, each with his sight up to the 500 yards we had concluded by calculation the foemen should be from the rise above the valley, we discovered, when at last with tightened breath we beheld them, they were a small herd of oxen quietly browsing on the herbage of South Africa's 'Veld.' And the generally and loudly expressed contempt for the eyesight and supplemental field-glasses of the worthy officer who had sent us on this ox-hunting expedition—expressed in language of the true warm pattern in vogue amongst South African irregular horsemen—would have paralyzed the auricular nerves of the Bishop of Pretoria, had he been within earshot, as strong language was a trooper characteristic he had more than once animadverted on at church parades.

This, however, is a digression, and has nothing whatever to do with the fact that our column had now gained the valley in front of the Wonderboompoort and 'nek;' and on the latter we discovered a few Boers, who discharged some elephant guns at our advanced line of skirmishers. We spent the best part of the

afternoon in harmless rifle-shot flirtation, and in response to a message to the camp for artillery assistance, received an ancient Whitworth seven-pounder, forwarded on a mule-waggon. This ingenious piece of ordnance, fixed on a small gun-carriage, was to all appearance the original cannon that Noah used for signals of distress at sea, before that worthy old sailor found himself high and dry on Ararat's mountain; and I confess that I felt more serious about the results to ourselves of its discharge than I did of the Boers' elephant guns and the iron pot-legs they were occasionally hurling down at us.

The Scots Fusilier bandsmen, however, seemed to possess, in no small degree, an implicit faith in their seven-pounder, and braced it up to shell a party of Boers who, ensconced in a clump of bush about 1,400 yards off, were occasionally placing shots to the danger of our skirmishing line. Bang! Where's the shell? Why, there—no—yes—fully 600 yards short. 'Wants more elevation,' says sapient military wiseacre. 'Wants melting up and making into rails for Delagoa Bay Railway,' sneers Mounted Volunteer, civil engineer by profession. 'Try it again, men,' cheerily says Colonel Gildea. They did try it again, and I put about fifty yards of distance between it and myself, and watched the result. It was unique. The shell went somewhere, but where? I scarcely think of the on-lookers there was one who could fairly point out the place; and as for the gun, an evident disagreement between it and its carriage had culminated in a dissolution of partnership,

for the one was carried back some half-dozen yards by the force of its own recoil, while the other turned over, a broken and shattered wreck.

'I think that is enough for to-day,' said the Colonel, viewing the ruins of the Whitworth; and in half an hour we headed our horses for the camp.

O fickle and treacherous African sky! We well knew what the banks of white cloud portended as we prepared to draw off all skirmishers, and return to our canvas homes; and when presently a big drop of water fell with a spattering noise on the side of my face, followed by a flash of lightning and the rumble of thunder, I knew that we were in for a decided drenching. I rode up to the Colonel, and mildly suggested that if he had no further use for me I would ride in to camp, which I proceeded to do as fast as a grand old troop-mare, formerly a weight-carrier in the Dragoon Guards, could bring me. But fast as the gallant old charger could go, she couldn't outrun the thunderstorm, which, fairly down on us, was saturating every particle of clothing I possessed, and forming a considerable reserve water-supply in the feet and legs of my riding-boots.

I reached the Market Square of Pretoria, and rode in to the European Hotel, and was fortunate enough to find its host temporarily residing there, who provided a glass of 'Three Star' for internal use, as a counterblast to the extra amount of cold water I was carrying outside. The storm passed, and, bidding adieu to mine worthy host, I pushed on for the camp. It was half-past six o'clock, and I was engaged to dine with the Administrator at seven; and the joyous recollection of my

soaked condition, and the necessity of making every haste, induced something very like cruelty to animals in my method of working forward the dragoon mare. Arrived in camp, mare returned to her lines, and short visit paid to our editor's quarters, consumed another fifteen minutes; then I deemed it almost time to see about some suitable apparel, as I concluded the dripping garments I had returned in were scarcely *comme il faut* to grace Sir Owen's table. My evening dress was with my luggage, and the latter had been stored in the Scots Fusiliers' canteen. So to the presiding genius of this excellently-arranged Temple of Bacchus I sped in all haste, leaving a trail of moisture behind me, as the water found its way through a couple of cracks in my long boots.

'How are you, sergeant-major?'

'Well, thank you. Dryer than you are, sir,' replied the canteen sergeant.

'I want to open my baggage to get out some evening dress. You have it safely stored, I suppose?' said I.

'Safe enough. It's behind under there,' said he, pointing to a pyramid of porter-barrels, rising from the ground to the roof of the bungalow.

'Whew! the deuce!' said I. 'Why, it would take a couple of fatigue-parties to disembowel it from such a pyre as that.'

'I'll have it all out in the morning,' replied the worthy sergeant-major.

'Rather late for dinner to-night,' I replied; saying which I retraced my steps to my editorial quarters, and,

ving peeled off my dripping clothes and hung them my waggon wheels to dry, got some fresh inside thing, and sought the comfort of its interior, where, veloped in a friendly kaross of skins, I indited an olanatory note as to my wardrobian difficulties to the vate secretary; and, with a very indifferent cup of fee and equally bad piece of ration-beef and bread, I ed the vacuum which nature abhors, while by the ıt of a blear-eyed candle I read that story of woman's y and anguish so graphically told in the novel of ast Lynne.' But the wet had raised those little mies to which I have before referred, who invaded waggon in myriads; and, driven to distraction by ir repeated attacks, I got down to sling my net-nmock outside. While so doing, my attention was ested by a fitful glare from the interior of the waggon ıad left, and, opening the canvas, I discovered my ıdle had fallen and saturating with grease the hat-case ereon it had been fixed, set the latter on fire, and a al flame was blazing up, and, in the event of my ıicle becoming ignited, threatening to spread con-gration to the lines of 'Norse's Orses' and 'Bullock-ggon Terrace' adjoining. Seizing the burning hat-e, and oblivious of the fact that I had left my tch and chain upon it, I threw it out on the ground l stamped out the fire; and when the companion of quarters, Deecker, returned from 'sentry-go'—on ıich he went three nights a week, armed with a rifle, nattress, and sundry and various bedclothes, where-th to enjoy the hours off duty—and heard my story what had occurred, and beheld me picking huge

pieces of fat from the works of my timekeeper, he refused to accept the other evidences of clothes hung out to dry, etc., but insisted that the champagne was extra strong, and that the burnt-out hat-box, oleaginous watch-case, and fattily-degenerated albert all went to prove how very thoroughly I must have dined with his Excellency.

Next evening we had blue-light experiments, and impelled by the combined feelings of curiosity and duty to my editorial function, I went down to the square where they were being tried. Arrived there, I beheld high up, exalted on a pole, a brace of blue-lights burning in the cavity of a tin reflector, followed by a colonial invention, the work of a gentleman intimately connected with Sir Owen Lanyon's correspondence department. It resembled what we were wont to call in juvenile days 'a devil'—not one of the fallen angels, but an ingenious mixture of wet gunpowder, the chief instruments in its construction being a pocket-knife and the palm of the hand. The secretary's invention looked like a little 'devil' grown up to man's estate, and gaily sputtered in the interior of a 'pickle jar,' making a miniature Vesuvius of itself in its expiring throes.

The intention of these experiments was to secure the best means of lighting up the approaches to the came in the event of a night attack by the enemy, and the results showed how entirely successful we should be in throwing a brilliant glare upon our own men, with a corresponding shadow on the attacking party. I never heard whether any of the methods experimented on

had been adopted—fortunately they were never required.

A meeting of Freemasons was held towards the end of January, and under circumstances so entirely novel that it may be worth while to recount them. In the first place, the members of the Craft had to obtain permission from their various commanding officers or respective ward-masters to attend the meeting—these passes, countersigned by the Garrison-Adjutant, were granted at bearer's own risk—the Masonic Hall of the town of Pretoria being the place of assembly. Slightly at variance with the motto of the brethren, 'Peace, love, and harmony,' was their appearance, clad in the various costumes of war, many carrying their rifles and bandoliers, a group of horses standing outside the Hall, while the Master and officers of the Lodge went through the various rites of the ancient Craft in an apartment through which the breezes freely blew, entering a line of loopholes knocked out of the wall at the one side, to escape by a similar set at the other—possibly the most novel system of ventilation that ever admitted the fresh air to participate in the mystic ceremonies of the free and accepted ones, in either Southern Africa or wherever else the maul has resounded or the compass been extended in open Lodge.

A promenade concert, too, was projected, and the 'Beleaguered Theatre,' an ingenious construction in which galvanized-iron roofing and camp-tables formed the principal component parts, was reared in the Garrison Square, and an announcement extraordinary

in our columns heralded the event in the following terms:

A GRAND PROMENADE CONCERT

Will take place, weather and Boers permitting,
inside the square on Tuesday, 1st February,
Commencing at 7 p.m.

Doors will be open all day.

Prices of admission:

Boxes (probably biscuit)—As much tin as you like;

Stalls—To be obtained from the Royal Artillery Stables, and paid for by in*stal*ments;

Dress Circle—*Uniform* price;

Pit—Nil (more's the *pity*). Dongas plenty.

Then followed a synopsis of the programme to be performed, and the public was thoughtfully reminded that there would be 'an interval for refreshments! Canteen close at hand,' and that omnibuses might be ordered for nine o'clock.

The occupants of the Convent Redoubt, stimulated by the success of the camp concert, followed the lead set them, by athletic sports; and, despite a broiling sun and unflecked sky, ran, jumped, threw the hammer, and bent to the 'tug of war' with all the enthusiasm and zeal of a parcel of schoolboys, and not the least interesting sight it was to behold a sprint of 120 yards run off between the Colonial Secretary and the giant of the Executive Council, whose efforts were rewarded with the loud cheers of the assembled on-lookers. And as though they fully sympathized with our open-air

amusements, the Boers were invisible at any of the points around during the day, nor did their patrolling-parties appear to interfere with our enjoyments.

It certainly was hard to realize that outside the mountain-chains that bounded Pretoria to north and south, armed bands were moving or carefully keeping watch, and that the defenders of our camp, intent on schoolboy amusements, might at the shortest notice be converted into combatants, with the game of death and destruction usurping their peaceful pastimes, and their 'tug of war' a grim reality.

One evening our camp was all astir from the report of a rifle discharged in one of the tents; and I learned on inquiry that a couple of artillerymen had been trying whether it was easier to load their carbines from a pouch or a bandolier, with the result of one of them carrying away the contents of his friend's weapon in his shoulder; and, talking the matter over with a military officer, I learned that a similar dereliction of duty was thus ingeniously punished by an Aldershot court-martial. The man from whose rifle the accidental shot was delivered was charged with unlawfully shooting his comrade—a charge which failed, owing to the purely accidental circumstances under which the gun was fired. The ingenious prosecutor, however, fell back on the dreadfully awful crime of 'making away with one round of ammunition;' and, succeeding in convicting the accused of this heinous offence, the sapient judges sentenced him to forty-two days' imprisonment with hard labour. Think of such luxuries as these, and learn, reader, with all the surprise you may, that

'Tommy Atkins' growls and grumbles, and we hear people say the army is not a popular institution.

Apropos of court-martial stories, our camp was amused by one currently reported, wherein a garrison officer was summoned upon two boards of inquiry—the one referring to the case of a sick soldier, and the other to an attack of glanders in a horse. Mistaking the board when called in to give his opinion as to what was best to be done, he horrified the court by advising them 'to shoot him at once.' It need not be added it was the diseased charger, and not poor 'No. three-from-the-right,' he intended for this summary mode of treatment; nor was the gallant officer referred to the same individual who, slumbering tranquilly during the latter part of a protracted military tribunal, somewhat scandalized his brother judges by asking, with a sudden start, the singular question of 'Eh—what's in the pool? I'll take a book!' from which it might be fairly surmised 'his thoughts were with his heart, and that was far away,' where the insinuating attractions of 'three card-loo' held a sway even over a military mind and rank approaching a 'majority.'

During the first week of February we had several reconnaissances and brushes with the Boers, one of which consisted in an early-morning march with a column and mounted men to draw a position called the 'Derdepoort,' some four miles from camp. It was intensely cold in the night and early-morning air, and I shall ever remember the feelings of my extremities as, seated on a piece of rock, field-glass in hand, I tried to peer through the grey morning light, till, absolutely

overpowered with fatigue and loss of rest, I nodded off to sleep, to be awakened by the chilling atmosphere around; and I could barely rub life into my eyes in time to see the flashes of our scouts' rifles exchanging shots with the enemy in the 'poort.' It was, however, a mild affair; but during the succeeding afternoon, in order to make up for the tameness of our morning's enjoyment, we had a duststorm, to see which I ascended to Fort Commeline, and was well repaid for my trouble. The whirlwind sent the red dust before it with rare gusto, curling it into spiral columns, to be broken into waves, or carried in huge volumes, completely hiding the camp and its outlying lines from view. Like most African storms, it was short-lived; and before descending I had the privilege of viewing a patrolling-party of the Boer foemen, some 250 strong, riding with a military precision along a mountain-ridge almost within range of a shell from our little fort, at which they turned and gazed with quite a nonchalant air. The men in the fort stood to arms, and the officer in command made a careful examination of the Boers riding past; the little flickering heliograph sent the news down to the Garrison Office, and they learned there almost as quickly as we did ourselves all that we could discover as to the number, probable destination, etc., of the enemy, which information is no doubt duly chronicled in the military archives of Pretoria's investment of '80 and '81.

Horse-sickness—a disease peculiar to the Transvaal, and of which there are several forms—made its appearance about this time in camp; and the first animal attacked with it was a large black mule, my own pro-

perty, which, with his mate, I had been allowed to retain, and was keeping for the possibilities of a flying column going out, or other eventualities necessitating a move. We dosed the mule and physicked him with all the resources of farrier civilization; but cases of recovery are few and rare when once the disease shows itself, which it does generally in a discharge from the nostrils, increasing in volume until it resembles a positive foam, culminating in an internal choking, when the animal falls dead. I was sorry to lose my fine mule, who in less than three hours from the time it showed this fell destroyer had made his attack, was food for the Aasvogels (vultures), whom we could often see soaring over us, looking like infinitesimal specks, so high they rose in the blue, unclouded sky above.

On the 7th of February we experienced what might be safely termed a sensation. It was caused by the arrival of a Boer messenger, who came in with a flag of truce, and bearing a message to the authorities, offering to exchange Major Clarke, Commandant Raaff, and some others who had been taken in the Magistrate's Office at Potcheffstroom, for the Boer prisoners captured by the Pretoria Garrison at the Zwartkopje. This truce-bearer, Botha by name, carried with him a couple of copies of the *Gouvernement Staats Courant* (Government Gazette), issued by the Boer Executive. These *Staats Courants*, published nominally at Heidelberg, but as I afterwards learned in reality at Potcheffstroom, contained despatches from Joubert, the Boer Commandant-General, in which he claimed a success over Sir George Colley's forces, and were dated 'Meek's Place,' 28th

January. This we afterwards learned referred to the action at 'Laing's Nek.'

The despatches of Joubert were couched in the language of simplicity itself, and having obtained the full translations, with permission to make them public, the following day the circulation of the *News of the Camp* received such an impetus that we were seriously considering the question of telegraphing for a 20,000-copies-an-hour 'Victory' machine from England, or other means of meeting the popular demand.

Much and animated discussion on the truth or otherwise of the statement made by the Boer Commandant in his despatches occupied all branches of Pretoria's defenders, and again the disposition to pooh-pooh the intelligence exhibited itself; and the emphatic individual who 'didn't believe a word of it, sir,' was to be heard assertively assuring his knot of auditors that a Boer couldn't tell the truth except by accident. I conversed with military men, who held somewhat similar opinions: 'Pack of lies, sir!' 'Why, what infernal rot!' etc., etc.; while others were prepared to think, as most people were after a day or two of reflection, that Sir George Colley, a victim to the prevailing military idea that the Boers wouldn't face the Imperial troops, had suffered for his temerity and failed in his attack, and that we must only postpone his anticipated relief a little longer.

The Boer messenger intended immediately returning with his answer, which I understood was a negative one; and as no opportunity of sending a message home had previously offered, I thought I might possibly

avail myself of his return to try and communicate with my friends in England, and submitted to the Colonel commanding a letter I had addressed to the Boer General, with an enclosure to be forwarded. He kindly used his good offices with the messenger to take it to his Commandant, who it was hoped would forward it to Joubert. The letter ran as follows:

'Pretoria, Feb. 8, 1881.

'*To P. J. Joubert, Commandant-General. Head-quarters, Heidelberg, or elsewhere.*

'SIR,

'You will do me a great personal favour by allowing the enclosed letter to be forwarded to my wife, in order to allay the great anxiety she will naturally feel at finding my communications suddenly stopped.

'The communication is left open for your personal inspection, to fully satisfy you that it contains nothing in any way referring to the operations, political or military, now going forward in the Transvaal. Your favour will more than oblige,

'Yours obediently,

'CHARLES DU VAL.'

'Mynheer Botha' took it and went upon his way, but whether rejoicing or otherwise deponent sayeth not; but in a few days' time I received my letter again from the hands of Mr. Melville, the Surveyor-General. It had been sent back, and across the inside page was written a few lines, more remarkable for strength, absence of grammar, and originality of composition,

than for suavity, grace, or diction, wherein the writer thus delivered himself:

'MR. DUVAL,
'Why do you bear arms against us?
In this most inequeous war of Lanyon?
Don't ask us for favours as long
As your administrator acts as a fool.'

I handed it to Sir Owen Lanyon, whose brows, on its perusal, began to show evident signs of incipient thunder, and immediately hurried back to my tent to get rid of the superfluous bile this reply was rapidly generating; and did so through the medium of a gall-tipped stylus, with which I penned an answer in the form of a letter to the paper, addressed to my editorial *confrère.* This I had every reason to think would reach the right quarter, as it was fully believed in camp that the Boer leaders possessed the entire files of our journal—a fact subsequently fully demonstrated, and an additional evidence of their success in obtaining all the information they wanted from sympathizers within our lines, while our intelligence, as purveyed by errant Kaffirs, was unreliable and often wilfully false.

The Boer Commandant's account of the fighting on the Drakensberg appeared to have fired the soul of our Garrison Commandant, and the 12th of February witnessed an engagement close to the left of the old ground at Springhaasfontein, where D'Arcy had been previously wounded, and taking place principally in the

vicinity of the cattle-kraal near the farmstead known as the Red House, was chronicled in the annals of our Pretorian fighting experiences as the 'Red House Kraal.'

A strong column, with two field-pieces and a small Krupp gun, assembled at about two o'clock in the morning, and moved out of the 'poort' in the direction of the 'Six-mile Spruit.' This occasioned some little surprise to those who supposed themselves most deeply in the Commandant's secrets, the more 'so as he had taken us the day before to the chain of hills at the north side of Pretoria, and whilst there, propounded to the captains commanding the Mounted Volunteers a scheme of attacking the Wonderboompoort. This now appeared to have been a ruse to direct the latent espionage of Boer sympathizers, if awakened by our reconnoitring movements, upon an opposite scent; but somewhat needless, for once the column started, the drivers of the mule-train alone, by their noisy imprecations and the cracking of their long whips, with reports as loud as pistol-shots, to say nothing of the rumble of the wheels of waggons and artillery, must have been heard miles away by the enemy's scouts, who, watchful and alert, conveyed at once the intelligence to their commandants that unusual movements were going forward.

My own riding-horse, though well looked after, and, through the good offices of a senior Captain of the Fusiliers, removed from the picquet line to the more genteel atmosphere of the stable for officers' horses, had never recovered his day out at the Zwartkopje; so I was compelled to draw on Nourse for a beast to carry

me. The sixteen-hand charger of the Auditor-General, the amateur Commissary, Mr. Kisch, had been added to the roll of equines destined to carry the 'blue Puggarees,' as his master, engaged on Government accounts, had relinquished Commissary work for a while. Having a lively recollection of the powerful stride of this big brute when encumbered by his owner with his friend *en croupe*, the eventful day that the mowing machine was left 'unspiked,' I felt satisfied that my mount was a capable one, and as I got fairly into the saddle, he felt like a house under me, as the hunting-men say.

Our progress was very slow, and, keeping close to the Commandant, I had a good opportunity for observing his disposition of men, the last of which consisted in the placing of 150 Foot Volunteers in equally divided numbers at the height above the Six-mile Spruit and in the houses and bush at the ford itself. We had just left the former party—who, under the command of the chief Engineer officer, Major le Mesurier, were dismounting from the waggons on which they were brought out—when, turning in my saddle near the foot of the hill, I observed a number of them most incautiously striking matches to light their pipes; and directing Colonel Gildea's attention to this piece of folly, he directed me to ride back and call the attention of the officer commanding them to the little signal-fires they were so successfully exhibiting to the enemy's scouts. It was an easy matter to do this; but when I essayed to find the Colonel again, I not only failed to do so for fully half an hour, but the column was equally a matter of invisibility.

I rode about in the direction I was convinced it must be, then back again; then to the right, then to the left, 'harking back' again to my old position at the foot of the ridge commanding the spruit; then plunging in a direct line to the rear, amidst a darkness so pitchy that it seemed at times difficult to distinguish anything half a horse's length ahead. Once more I pushed forward, and on my ear, now fully cocked, the pleasant ripple of water fell, and I knew I had struck the river, and, by following its bank, would probably come on the spruit, or ford. Five minutes' experimenting brought me to my goal, the spruit, on the other side of which, sitting alone and solitary on horseback, was the Surveyor-General, Melvill. A few of his black scouts were a little ahead, but their colour and that of the night assimilated too well to make their discovery an easy task. I gave 'sixteen-hander' a drink in the river, and remained with Mr. Melvill until the Colonel's arrival (which occurred almost immediately), and then we moved onward—the Pretoria Carabineers having been sent forward, under Captain Sanctuary, to encircle and seize a hill and ridge where it was supposed the Boer picquet was stationed, and where we had shelled them on several occasions on the same ground.

'Hallo!' said some one; 'there's a light!'

'Where?' was the answer of two or three voices.

'Why, there! in that old canteen supposed to be deserted.'

'Go in and see who it is,' said the Colonel; and a young Carabineer and myself essayed to do his bidding.

We smashed the window in, and, revolver in hand,

jumped into the room, and, striking a match, pushed our way into the inner rooms to find the malcontent Boer we anticipated, securing none other than a very contented Pretoria Foot Volunteer, the lighting of whose pipe had occasioned our determined assault and capture of the deserted canteen.

Word having reached us that Sanctuary and his Carabineers were in full possession of the ridge and hill ahead, the column was ordered to follow us; and Colonel Gildea, accompanied only by myself, rode on up the rise to where the mounted men awaited him. We moved slowly over the broken, stony 'Veld;' not a word exchanged; the Colonel singularly reticent in demeanour, looking, with compressed lips and determined expression, as though he meant fighting if he got a chance. He was dressed in mufti, and singularly enough, as the sequel proved, afforded a better mark in the wideawake hat, shooting-jacket, and cord riding-breeches he was attired in than the more attractive trappings of a Colonel in command.

On reaching the ridge, the Carabineers went forward to seize, under cover of darkness, a stone cattle-kraal about 1,000 yards from the Red House and its laagers, and which, as I have already stated, gave a distinctive title to the fight. The Carabineers went ahead, the column was hurried forward, and, riding ahead with the Colonel, we soon discovered that the enemy had been too well aware of our movements, and secured the kraal themselves, and from its interior were firing rapidly at 'our boys,' the Pretoria Carabineers, who, taking a position in a stripe of trees, were at short range answering them

pretty freely, the flashes of the rifles of both sides engaged showing most brilliantly in the dusky morning light, while the reverberations of the ringing discharges were echoed and re-echoed over the hill-tops around.

We reached a position about equidistant from the house and kraal, probably 1,100 or 1,200 yards from both, and getting the field-artillery into position, sent a shell at the latter as soon as daylight was sufficiently clear to form a reliable idea of what was going on. The first missile was short, but, as if to atone for their short-sightedness, the gunners fairly planted the next one right into the centre of their object. The Boers swarmed out and took shelter on the farther side of the kraal, and as the sun rose we could see their supports appearing on the horizon-line, coming up in parties of fours and half-dozens; while some were saddling up at the Red House and galloping out by a detour behind intermediate rising-ground, and, joined by the others at the kraal were working away round to turn the left flank where the Carabineers, some of Nourse's men, and a number of coloured scouts were extended in a long crescent-formation, the farther extremity of which faced the enemy, and the near one touched where our artillery and the infantry, the latter quietly sitting on their waggons, were in position.

The tactics of the Boers at the kraal seemed to have come like a surprise on our men; and we learned that Captain Sanctuary and a number of his Carabineers were down, having come to grief almost at the beginning of the engagement. By some extraordinary management, or mismanagement, the ambulance-waggon

sent down to their assistance was advanced several hundred yards in front of the fighting line, and not a great way to the left of the direction of the artillery fire.

I rode down there, and saw poor Sanctuary lying on the ground. Every inch a soldier, his reply to my query as to whether he was badly hit, was:

'Only my leg broken.'

And I afterwards learned that he had tied a ramrod to his fractured limb to enable him to stump out of action, saying as he did so:

'It is more gentlemanly to walk out than to be carried.'

The Boers worked well round to the left, and, reinforced from a laager near, made matters so lively for the men at the centre of the crescent, that a party of them, mostly young lads and the black scouts, broke ground and came galloping in to where the artillery and infantry were stationed, allowing the Boers to get into the cover of a strip of trees some three or four hundred yards to our left rear, from which they poured a smart fire which threatened to enfilade the whole column.

I had just returned to Colonel Gildea, after conveying his order to the artillery to retire to a position from which they could shell the outflanking Boers, when he gave a lurch forward; but thinking his horse had stumbled I took no notice of the movement. A moment or two later I noticed an ashen hue coming over his face, and said:

'Are you hit, sir?'

'I think I am,' said he.

'I am sure of it,' I replied, noticing the blood trickling down the leg of his riding breeches. 'Hadn't you better come to an ambulance?'

'I think I can manage yet awhile,' he replied.

At this juncture Mr. Melvill rode up, and other assistance arriving, we helped the Colonel off his horse, and secured some temporary aid to staunch his wound, which was a severe one.

Thinking that I might possibly be of some assistance to the Adjutant, I hurried back and found him trying to evolve system out of chaos—the confusion occasioned by the men who had broken ground very nearly producing a panic, the Boers making the most of their opportunity, and for fifteen minutes establishing a veritable *mauvais quart d'heure*, during which men, horses, and transport-mules came in for a fair share of attention. It was said that one of the latter was perforated with no less than seven shots, and an Engineer officer, who had served through the Zulu War, said to me that all the firing at Ulundi put together was as nought compared to that lively quarter of an hour. My 'sixteen-hander' bore his blushing honours thick upon him in the shape of a bullet-wound which had ripped up six inches of his left flank, and another which chipped the skin off of his wither where the mane and shoulder combine, but he was a thoroughly dependable brute, and never even so much as swished his tail in acknowledgment of the attentions he was receiving.

The soldiers of the Fusiliers sat on the waggons until one or two of them were shot to death there.

Then it was considered time they should dismount, which they did, and waiting for orders to fire, which never came, were at length retired behind the artillery, without discharging a solitary round of ammunition at the enemy.

My time was fully occupied bringing reports to the Colonel, now lying on a mule-waggon, and conveying his suggestions to the senior Captain, who, suddenly called on to take command, was placed in a really serious and difficult position. The Carabineers and Nourse's Horse brought forward in a ring to cover the column, however, effectually checked the Boer advance from our late left flank and rear; and it was now seen that in the hurry attendant on the confusion and change of position, the ambulance, its doctor, attendants, and wounded had been left in the open, and the folly of having advanced it such a distance in front of our previous line was apparent. In a moment or two it was seen that the Boers were firing into it; and that they did so with effect we subsequently learned, as they succeeded in shooting through both legs the hospital orderly, supplying an additional wound to a man lying within who had been previously hit, and perforating a German watchmaker who had gone out as a Red Cross volunteer to see some fun at the fight, and who came in for his share of the bullet which broke the legs of the hospital orderly—the only thing I ever knew that came direct from one of the departments without being requisitioned to do so.

Some time later it was seen that the ambulance was in the hands of the Boers, who were leading it away to

their laager; and the officer now in command asked me to inquire from the Colonel what he wished him to do. The latter, on being assured that the ambulance was undoubtedly taken by the Boers, said, 'He can now retire;' which message I duly bore him, and the retirement was made general.

The engagement commenced about half-past four o'clock, before daylight; and we recrossed the Six-mile Spruit at a little after seven, the Boers making no effort to follow. Here we found Colonel Bellairs, C.B., who had come out from Pretoria on learning that Colonel Gildea was wounded. The command of the column having now devolved on him, I rode forward in company with Mr. Commeline (the Engineer officer), and immediately in the rear of a party of Nourse's Horse, scouting well ahead as advanced guard.

About a mile outside the town I met the Colonial Secretary, whose eyes dilated not a little when, in reply to a question as to what had been done, I replied that, under the circumstances, I thought *we* had, and very considerably, too, with a brace of commanding officers, thirty men, forty or fifty horses and mules *hors de combat*, and a surgeon and ambulance-waggon of wounded in the hands of the enemy. I passed the Colonel as I rode in. He was apparently as comfortable as a man could be with a hole through his leg, no proper medical aid, and an open mule-waggon to lie in; and smoked his pipe as he lay, answering cheerily enough when asked how he was. But it was easy to note that he was severely weakened by loss of blood and the pain of his wound. On the same waggon were a trio of

other wounded men, amongst whom I noted the young Carabineer who, at the first brush with the enemy near Pretoria, had asked me to chronicle the fact that 'Belfast fired the first shot.'

Immediately on my arrival in camp I repaired to the Colonel's quarters to see Mrs. Gildea, a lady of great amiability and courage, to inform her of her husband's being wounded. I found she had been already made aware of it, and was exhibiting great presence of mind and thought—an extraordinary natural good humour, which seemed inherent, buoying her bravely up.

The camp was in a decided turmoil of conversation over the events of the morning, and one of the least pleased of its residents was the proprietor of the 'sixteen-hander' when he viewed his horse as I returned him 'torn and bloody from the fray.' He put in a gentle protest to Nourse that he would feel better pleased if he could reserve his stud as much as possible for less dangerous work than that of paying morning visits to the Boers at the Red House or any other kraal. It was a matter of supreme personal satisfaction to myself, however, that my mount was such a good one, enabling me as it did to get through an amount of galloping that would have pumped out an ordinary horse; and the increased respect I henceforward held for auditor-generals was only surpassed by the veritable esteem with which I regarded their big-boned horses.

CHAPTER VII.

AFTER THE FIGHT—CURIOUS INCIDENTS—CAMP LIFE—IRRECONCILABLES—SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE—HALF RATIONS—'GOD'S ACRE'—NIGHT ALARMS—AN INTELLIGENT BOARD—CANTEENS AND MUTINY—DUTCH BOTANY—THE IDES OF MARCH—CIVIL AMENITIES OF CIVIL WAR—NEWS FROM OUTSIDE—BOER GAZETTES—NEWS OF COLLEY'S DEFEAT AND DEATH—SOME DEPARTURES—HOW MAJUBA HILL DISASTER MIGHT HAVE BEEN PREVENTED—RECEPTION OF PEACE NEWS IN CAMP—ARRIVAL OF SIR EVELYN WOOD'S ENVOYS—END OF INVESTMENT.

It is not within the scope of this volume to do more than lightly touch upon the remaining incidents of Pretoria's investment; and my personal experiences, which were of an ever-varying kind, must suffice to be told in the briefest possible way. In fact the necessity for epitomizing my description of both of one and the other is gravely suggesting itself from the fear of having already wearied the patience of my readers by the lengthened *resumé* I have given of events and personal incidents transpiring in connection with this remarkable hundred-day siege, whose closing scenes it shall be mine to now describe with as little prolixity as possible.

A lady whose son was amongst those wounded in the ambulance went out to the Red House the day following the engagement. Negotiations were thus opened, and

the Boer prisoners we had captured at the Zwartkopje were sent out to the Six-mile Spruit, and there liberated, to go where they pleased, in return for which favour the surgeon and wounded occupants of the ambulance taken by the Boers were sent in to camp. The governing authorities were rather indignant at my stating that an exchange of prisoners had taken place—an admission of 'belligerent rights' to those whom they still continued to designate as 'rebels'—and being pleased to think they had hit upon an ingenious method of evading this responsibility, they called on me to contradict, in the columns of the *News of the Camp*, so terribly damaging a statement as the one to which our publication had given currency. Exchange or no exchange, one thing is certain—that if the ambulance-waggon and its occupants had not fallen into the hands of the Boers, the prisoners from Zwartkopje Laager would have remained in durance vile, and daily cursed, as it was stated they did, the tyrannical and brutal treatment which compelled them to bathe every morning, wash occasionally during the day, and obey a few other sanitary conditions exceedingly repugnant to their souls as free and independent burghers from the 'Waterberg Distrikt' of 'De Zuid Afrikans Republik' ('The South African Republic').

The men wounded at the Red House Kraal were in many instances struck in the lower limbs, and where amputations became necessary generally succumbed after the operations, swelling the death-roll of the Carabineers considerably.

The young fellow whose mother, impelled by her

sense of maternal duty, had gone out to the Boer camp to minister to and aid him in his hour of danger, was one of the first to die. He was the son of an old African Dutchman, of whom it was currently reported that during the war in the Free State, when Sir Harry Smith defeated the Boers at Boomplaats, he had it in his power to save a number of condemned rebels from being shot, but refused to do so. If this story be true, the death of his son by the descendants of these executed Boers was certainly a wonderful example of the avenging stroke come home at last, of a veritable Nemesis of retribution.

Some curious incidents occurred at the Red House Kraal fight. The quartermaster-sergeant of the Royal Artillery and the hospital orderly accompanying the ambulance had both complained loudly of not being permitted out with the columns, and were, in deference to their expressed desires, allowed to join in the attack on the kraal, with the result of mortal injuries to both, from which they shortly afterwards died. A capital young fellow, a Carabineer, was out with his troop for the first time from the date of his leaving hospital, where he had been recuperating a wound received on almost the same ground at Springhaasfontein some time before, and now got his death-warrant in the shape of a leg shattered by a rifle-bullet. Captain Sanctuary, the Commandant of the Carabineers, also succumbed to his wounds; and the Red House Kraal helped to quicken the trade of the surgeon and the coffin-maker more than any of the engagements and skirmishes which had taken place between the leaguered garrison of Pretoria and the

malcontent Boers around it. A bag containing a parcel of sandwiches and a lock of a woman's hair was picked off the ground by a returning trooper, a curious combination of material and—may I be permitted to write—*im*material things.

An interregnum of comparative quiet transpired after the Red House engagement, the command of the garrison being taken over by Colonel Bellairs, C.B. We had a Boer scare at night to enliven us, and the men were turned out for several hours in drenching rain awaiting the enemy, who came not. Martial and civil law got battering their systems and statutes one against the other. Canteens were opened in the volunteer lines, and succeeded in demoralizing the men in their vicinity more than half a dozen drubbings from the enemy could have done; and Kaffirs came in with yarns and stories only less wonderful than those evolved from the imaginative brains of the camp gossips, whose stock of reliable information, as passed from mouth to mouth, was the most astonishing thing in the way of intelligence fecundity I ever knew or heard of.

A number of irreconcilables, whom it was impossible to satisfy or please, left the civil laager, and took up their abodes in the town of Pretoria; and amongst them a rather remarkable character, an adventurer who had figured as a respondent in a sensational South African divorce case some time before, the plaintiff in which was a gallant colonel who lost his life fighting as he fell on Zlobane Mountain in the Zulu campaign. The adventurer had, it was assumed, married the Colonel's widow, and they occupied a suite of apartments in the

most remarkable bullock-waggon, which now 'outspanned' near the Market Square of Pretoria, it was ever my privilege to see. Great efforts had been made to render it comfortable, and it must be confessed that, with all his faults (and the gentleman had several), a want of hospitality could not be included in the list. The lady—a veritable 'Lady Dolly,' just as though she had walked out of Ouida's novel, attired in a thoroughly juvenile costume, and passing her fifty or more years fairly well for forty or less—talked fashionable small-talk, and smoked elegant cigarettes in a still more elegant meerschaum and amber cigar-holder; and the combination of Burlington Arcadia, Rotten Row, and the Lady's Mile which her conversation suggested, and that of the bullock-waggon home in which, not only during the war, but for the previous twelve months, she had been living, with all its surroundings of Kaffir servants, open-air fires for cooking, etc., was in every sense a remarkable one. Not less remarkable was the thoroughly satisfied manner in which she rambled on through the various phases of her fashionable chit-chat, quite oblivious to the contrast it presented to the surroundings in which she was placed. These irreconcilables gave some little trouble to the military governing authorities, who, accustomed to their own strict systems of dominant power and implicit obedience, failed to understand the civilian feelings that rebelled against what to them seemed something like despotism. While the officer might have used the wisdom of discretion in dealing with the civilian, and have remembered for the time being that severe discipline was with him

an exceptional condition, the civilian, on the other hand, should have considered the many difficulties with which the defence was beset, and not, by a persistently aggravating behaviour, endeavoured to promote them where they had not previously existed.

Determined to try and send some intelligence through to the outer world, I carefully prepared a lengthy *resumé* of what had taken place in Pretoria from the date of the closing of our communications, and had the same set up in small type and printed on a newspaper sheet, the whole subject-matter forming six large columns of ordinary daily paper size. A photographic artist of Pretoria, Swiss by birth, and 'Gros' by name, who had taken numerous pictures of our camp-life, kindly photographed the broad sheet of type into a microscopic three-inch square production. Sir Owen Lanyon, with whom I had conversed on the subject, suggested to me to send it to the London *Daily Telegraph*, and promised that a Kaffir runner leaving with despatches should bear it; but intelligent 'Ikona Mali' (No Money), and two others of his fraternity who at later intervals were also despatched, and carried my photograph *resumé*, were but broken reeds upon which to depend—as I afterwards discovered that at least two of the messengers failed to penetrate any distance through the enemy's 'waacht,' and eventually returned to Pretoria, their rolling eyes goggling as they poured forth into the ears of an interested Executive the breathless narrations of their hair-breadth escapes in attempting to run the gauntlet of encircling Boerdom.

I tried one fellow on my own account, and having folded and addressed my photographed tale of our experiences, I pushed it into one of the little brass boxes the Kaffirs carry their snuff in, which being filled up with sneeze-producing powder and carefully placed in that slit in the lobe of my dusky envoy's ear (a peculiarity of all the Zulu races), I started him off, with a line to a friend of mine at Newcastle, in Natal—payment on delivery being enjoined in my instructions to the consignee of what I, at least, deemed a very precious memoir. I never heard that my acquaintance received my missive, and conclude that my carefully-planned scheme, like many others of 'mice and men' sung of by the Scottish poet, had 'gane agley.'

The food problem, as March came sauntering in, and no relief column arm-in-arm with it, keeping it company, began to present an interesting subject for the consideration of the Commissariat Department, and mysterious whispers as to the immediate prospect of half rations spread dismay amongst the by no means over or well fed occupants of our defensive positions; and the gloom which coming events seemed to gastronomically cast before them, oppressed, though it did not interfere with the digestion of, many a worthy ward-master.

The commissary officers were metaphorically patted on the back when, evincing a sudden zeal, they 'commandeered' all the Kaffirs in the camp to pluck 'mealies' at an adjoining farm, and consumed a brace of days in this (to the Kaffirs) congenial occupation, securing some eighty bags of what is best known to

the European reader as 'Indian corn;' a grand fund, to be reserved as an intermediary between starvation and the hauling down of the ancient red, white and blue rag of old England.

These 'half-ration' prognostications were realized as far as the male population of our camps were concerned early in March; the fresh 'trekk' ox-beef was supplemented twice weekly by preserved meat—a *bonne bouche* the sportive Commissariat Department sprung suddenly upon the recipients of their bounty; and the bread, which had latterly begun to dwindle to an extent suggestive of the use of fraudulent weights and measures by the distributors, was eked out by army-biscuits.

Have you ever eaten army biscuits, gentle reader of sound tooth and muscular jaw? Have you ever tried to grind under your best molar those very palpable fragments of fossilized pats of flour and water under their best conditions of freshness, sound bags, dry storage, and general cleanliness? If so, and knowing the difficulties of digestion you then encountered, you will readily appreciate and sympathize with us poor cooped-up Pretorians in the enjoyments to be derived from munching hundreds of bags of commissariat biscuit resurrected from some old army store where for probably years past they had afforded shelter, refection, and happy hunting-grounds to legions of rats; and now, musty, mouldy and perforated with an interesting little insect called the 'weevil,' were placed on the 'Japanese ware' or 'old china' when camp 'society' enjoyed its 'afternoon tea.'

One evening as a commissariat officer was partaking a cup of this beverage beneath the shelter of the ox-waggon sail of a worthy camp-resident, the latter ventured a mild remonstrance to the man of supplies on the preponderance of the weevil over the flour-paste in the component parts of the biscuit rations, and showed a sample as proof of his statement, wherein the merry little miner had wrought his subflouraneous passages and tunnels until a mere shell alone remained.

'This is all very bad, I admit,' said he of the Supply Department, 'but you have selected probably the worst piece in the lot. Where is the rest of the ration?'

'The rest?' replied his host, 'the rest? Well, when I last saw it, 'twas crawling from under the tent curtain, having left the plate I placed it on half an hour before quite three yards in the rear. Not bad time and distance for weevil, I think.' A reply much relished by the stronger digestions assembled. Nor was the weevil the worst point of consideration in the biscuit ration, for his presence would have been gladly welcomed in larger numbers if accompanied by a proportionate increase of his floury habitation; but the amounts served out were quite too microscopic to suit the absorbing appetites of many a hungry trooper or Fusilier, after a night-patrol or lengthy 'sentry-go.'

The hospital work went daily on, and the surgeons did their rounds as usual. Medical comforts were not in superabundance, there being an especial want of carbolic oil; but the men bore their injuries uncomplainingly, and I never visited the sick-wards without coming

away impressed with the exemplary patience exhibited by their occupants. One of them, a young Belfast man, who I have already mentioned as claiming the honour of having fired the first shot near Pretoria, one evening told me that all the sensations of pain he was suffering from were in that portion of his leg which had been amputated some days before. He described minutely the sensations which seemed focussed in the foot and toes of his lost limb; the latter, he said, seemed as if pressed in a vice. In an adjoining tent, a young officer of the '94th' told me, on my recounting his neighbour's curious sensations, that one of his men, when in Zululand, complained bitterly of the frost biting the fingers of a hand which, with the forearm attached, the surgeons had annexed some weeks before. Such are the vagaries of nervic force, resulting from amputations.

Riding into camp one day from a skirmish of cattle guards, at the old ground opposite the Wonderboompoort, I made a detour of the outskirts of the town, and, led by fancy, brought my horse's steps to the spot known as the Military Cemetery. A primitive burial-ground it was, partially surrounded by a low wall, on a stone of which could be read the inscription: 'Erected by the 1-13th P.A.L.I., 17th June, 1878.' Twenty-one new mounds of brown sandy soil were the latest additions here to 'God's acre,' and marked the last resting-places of those killed in action, or who had died of their wounds since War, the destroyer, flaunted his flag over previously peaceful Pretoria. I dismounted to take a glance at these mounds—the last resting-places of those whom but a few hours before I had seen full

of life and strength, and with whom I had probably bandied many a passing jest.

Rude attempts to form crosses on the graves had been made by the placing of lines of stones, and the planting of a few flowers had even been essayed; but in most cases, beyond this there was nothing to denote that beneath the unsightly mounds of earth lay the men and boys whose lives had been sacrificed in this miserable struggle. One of these graves, however, arrested my attention—the first of the file to the right: it had heaped over it withered and, withering flowers, and rudely constructed wreaths; and as unfortunately will happen in the most serious of places, a ridiculous effect was produced by bunches of these decaying flowers being placed in old preserve-jars, the glittering trade labels of which, with their distinctive appellations of 'Strawberry Jam,' 'Red Currant,' etc., were quite too prominently displayed, and immediately met the eye, much to the detriment of any feelings of passing sentiment. Worse than all, one bunch of flowers was upheld in the body of a brandy-bottle, the bottom of which had been knocked out to form a 'bouquet-holder,' and the neck pushed into the earth, inverting its 'Three-Star' label, and suggesting all kinds of incongruous things, all of which were foreign to serious thoughts. A more desolate-looking, ill-kept graveyard it would have been hard to meet with; but I dare say our fallen comrades slept just as peacefully with a broken brandy-flask for a headstone, as the great ones of Egypt beneath the giant mausoleums of the Pyramids, reared by ages of toil.

Captain Sanctuary, as already mentioned, died from the wounds he received at the Red House Kraal, whereas Colonel Gildea, though much the older man of the two, made a rapid recovery; in fact, some three days after the affair I was one of those privileged to see him, and found him sufficiently strong to converse freely on the events of our last 'day out.' Nor was he unmindful of any of my efforts to be of assistance to him, but rather inclined to credit my modest endeavours at a higher value than these services deserved.

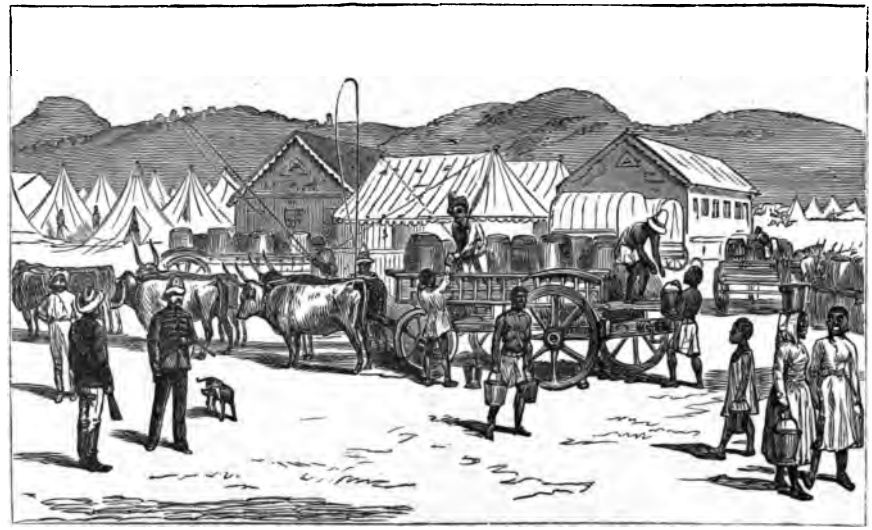
'Very little information trickling in from without,' said I. 'Their scouting is pretty good around here, sir.'

'It is nearly nine weeks since any despatches arrived from Potcheffstroom,' replied the Colonel; 'and if not yet relieved, I fear they are in a bad way there;' a sentiment which was beginning to be gloomily canvassed amongst those who concentrated in their august persons the governing powers of our limited dominion.

The interregnum of general quiet was monotonous, being only broken by a few skirmishes and couple of night alarms; both of the latter occasioned by the supreme intelligence of the coloured scouts, who mistook on one occasion a former magistrate of Pretoria and thoroughly loyal subject, a Mr. Skinner, who stuck to his farm near our camp, for a Boer patrol, calculated at from 50 to 5,000 strong; and on another midnight hour blazed away at a meditative jackass, who, having given the Transport officers the slip, was browsing quietly in the enjoyment of his nocturnal freedom. The coloured scouts took deliberate aim at the inoffensive 'moke,' and, as a consequence, the African de-

scendant of Balaam's war-horse was uninjured, and proceeded with the demolition of 'Veld' brush, while the dusky marksmen hurried back to the camp, the defenders of which were duly routed from their beds, guards turned out and positions duly taken. When the real cause of the alarm came to be known, gallant Fusilier, artillery gunner, sapper, and volunteer vied with each other in the anathemas they hurled at the woolly heads of the intelligent scouts, whose want of ability to distinguish a Boer from a jackass had been decisively proved.

Early the following morning my second sleep was disturbed by a grinding crash, followed by questions more remarkable for strength than relevancy, and looking from my waggon I discovered that the Aquarius who supplied the tea and coffee making liquid to 'Ward No. I., had quietly driven his ox-waggon, with its barrels of water, over the little brick wall and curtain surrounding our editorial tent, taking in the corner of my *confrère* Deecker's bedstead, occasioning a severe fracture of one of its iron legs, and almost producing an ebullition of temper from its occupant, who, as a rule, was much too easy-going an individual to allow excitement to interfere with the general placidity of his disposition. The 'voorlooper,' or leader of the ox-team, had never heard of Euclid, and his ideas of angles were based upon his own practical experiences; so there the bedstead lay, a passive protest against temperance principles, a sleepless monument to the destroying influences of cold water. A board of military officers subsequently sat to assess the damages that had been sustained by



OUR WATER CART.

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leading 'drunks' the next; and having pitched heavily into the canteens in the *News of the Camp* columns, and secured any amount of obloquy from the thirsty souls within our lines on subsequent orders being issued to close them, I rested from my labours in my slung hammock and enjoyed the privilege of overhearing a birthday party celebration at the adjoining tent of a certain ward-master of Dutch extraction. The conversation was running fast and furious—faster and more furious as the bottles on the table were being converted into what are called 'dead marines'—but still carefully kept within a fairly phlegmatic limit. The great point at argument appeared to be the botanical one of grafts and grafting, and the origin of pumpkins—the latter being suggested by the gourd water-bottles or calabashes, passed round to lessen the strength of the 'square-face' gin of the worthy host. One gentleman had just assertively given forth the opinion that the calabash gourd was the result of tying a water-melon and a pumpkin together in a piece of rag, and thus planting them; when another of the party, who had previously proposed and drank to quite a number of toasts, woke up from out his reverie and propounded a theory of original Dutch botany in the following sentence: 'Dat een prachtige vrucht te verkrygen was door een turksche vyg te enten op een igzer vark'—a free translation of which explained 'that a fine fruit would be procured by grafting a prickly pear upon a porcupine;' after which effort Mynheer subsided, and his dutiful son came round to my tent and translated and explained the Babel of conversation to which I had been an involuntary listener.

We had an additional cause for disquietude in the continuance of broken and showery weather during the earlier weeks of March, as we knew that if the rain were general it would render the roads by which the relief column was expected, if not absolutely impassable, still extremely difficult, hampered, as we anticipated they would be, with a provision convoy for our use. Nevertheless, that everlasting principle of hope was paramount; and we drew a sweep of something over sixty sovereigns, entitled 'The *News of the Camp* Relief Lottery,' the holder of the date on which Sir George Colley or his representative entered Pretoria to be adjudged the winner. It is needless to add that Sir George did not arrive; and I made a suggestion at a later date through our little journal, that the amount should form the nucleus of a larger amount to be devoted to erecting a suitable memorial to our brave comrades who had fallen at Pretoria—a suggestion since taken up, and which I trust ere this work is published will have been carried out.

'Beware the Ides of March!' was the prophetic warning given to the Roman tribune; and from that early date in the world's history till the present time, the middle of that historic month seems fraught with interest, and events of greater or lesser moment are borne upon its gale. Scarcely had the 14th day of March, and the 'eighty-eighth' of our beleaguerment, been ushered into existence, than a very decided gloom seemed prevalent at Garrison and District Offices, and the 'half rations' we were now subsisting on looked more diminished than ever before. I found on inquiry that a

'Kaffir rumour' was in, to the effect that Sir George Colley had been killed in Natal; but having a pronounced opinion as to the verity, or rather want of it, of these dusky informants, I gave it personally not the slightest credence, and busied myself with watching a Boer patrol crossing to the west of our camp, editor's work, arranging sketches and photographs, and the usual round that filled up my time on quiet days. But when the sun rose on the historic '15th,' I learned that something unusual was in the wind; and a little later in the day our astonished eyes could scarcely credit the sight which presented itself of a column of mounted Boers with close on fifty ox-waggons crossing the 'Veld,' about seven miles to the west of our camp, and carrying a huge banner of the South African Republic reared in front of the leading waggon, while all along on either side rode armed men, their rifles at the 'carry,' and displaying any amount of discipline and ease in their military deportment. I ordered my horse to be saddled up at once, and repaired to the Garrison Office to see Colonel Gildea, who had recovered sufficiently to be able to ride about again. I felt sure that the march-past of the Boers would soon be interfered with, and certainly such a favourable opportunity for attacking them never before offered to the defenders of Pretoria, who from Commandant down to drummer-boy were all agog for the fray, and were bustling up with saddles, bridles, rifles, and bandoliers, in momentary anticipation of hearing the orders to move out to the attack. Cooler counsels prevailed, and the garrison, like greyhounds in the slips with the game in full view, chafed and fretted,

reasoned and wondered; and everybody 'wanted to know, you know,' as to what our inaction could mean, whilst the leading waggon of the foemen quietly disappeared over a ridge some four miles nearer to us than that of Elandsfontein, from which place the laager was evidently being transferred. On this new ground the Boers halted, and immediately set to work to strengthen their position in full view of the camp of Pretoria; and their figures could be distinctly outlined against the blue sky, carrying stones to build 'schanzes,' 'kraals,' and other rudimentary fortifications, which however afforded them sufficient cover, as we had previously learned, from which they could make a stout resistance.

Whilst wondering at the apathy displayed by our military authorities, and the temerity exhibited by the Boers in thus boldly marching past, the secret of the latter explained itself, the news being heliographed down that a man on horseback bearing a flag of truce was coming in from their column. A party consisting of Colonel Gildea, Adjutant Chichester, Mr. Joubert, a nominee of the Executive Council, Captain Anderson of the Carabineers, Mr. Lys as interpreter, and myself, rode out of camp to meet the truce-bearer. Some two and a half miles out we met Mr. Melvill, who had received from the Boer messenger despatches for Sir Owen Lanyon and two papers—a *Staats Courants* or Boer Government gazette, and a newspaper which he said was for Mr. Celliers, the editor of the *Volkstem.*

Mr. Melvill went in with these, and our party rode ahead to where the truce-bearer was standing by his

horse conversing quite demurely with a couple of Melvill's scouts. He rejoiced in the name 'Pretorius' —was a stout-made fellow, not at all badly turned out, well mounted and housed, and evidently quite satisfied with himself; and the intelligence he brought in; the gist of which we extracted from him through Lys whose thorough knowledge of the Dutch spoken in the Transvaal came in specially useful in the Boer pumping process our new acquaintance was subjected to.

His story was a confirmation of the Kaffir rumour that Sir George Colley had been killed, which he averred he had, on the Drakensberg, on the Sunday fortnight past. The Colonel filled out a little whisky and water from his flask, and offered some cheroots to the Boer messenger. He took the latter at once, and the former after the Colonel had taken a previous drink out of it as a guarantee that it was all right, Lys hinting that such was the custom of the country; and so the little amenities of this very civil civil war went on, and some quiet little badinage passed between our party and the enemy's envoy. Before returning I gave him a letter for England, and asked Lys to impress upon him the great sense of obligation I should feel if it were forwarded home. On our return to camp I obtained information as to the contents of the envelopes sent in. They contained amongst other things a *Staats Courant* with reports of two fights (Ingogo and Amajuba), in the last of which Sir George Colley and twenty officers were said to be killed or wounded, and an eight-day armistice agreed on. There was also part of a Free State paper, *De Express*, with a report of a debate on the Trans-

vaal question in the House of Commons, the first bit of home news seen for months, and proportionately valued by us. It also contained Earl Kimberley's telegram of instructions to effect a settlement of the Transvaal question upon any terms compatible with the dignity of England; and it further stated that telegrams of condolence had been forwarded to Lady Colley from Joubert, and President Brand of the Free State. In spite of these almost decisive proofs of the serious aspect of affairs in the Drakensberg, many persons refused to credit the startling intelligence, and expressed it as their opinion that the Boers were playing a game of 'bluff' with us, the success of which lies in the ability of the player to deceive and throw dust into the eyes of his opponent.

Perhaps one of the most interesting of the enclosures sent in was a letter from the Boer Commandant, P. J. Joubert, to Mrs. Gildea, the wife of Pretoria's Commandant, offering her a safe-conduct pass through to Natal for herself, servants, and baggage, and deploring, in very studied and politic language, the death of her husband, who, he had learned with regret, had fallen in the action near the Red House; and who, tolerably well resurrected on this eventful 15th of March, enjoyed very much the perusal of the expressed consideration of the Boer General for his supposed widow. He hastened to let him know, in a letter of acknowledgment, that he was still better than several dead men, and hoped to be able to return the Dutch Commandant's widow a similar compliment.

We published in our journal the details of 'The

Battle of the Ingogo,' as extracted from the *Free State Express;* and its list of killed and wounded, etc., created immense interest, and it was with difficulty we kept the supply up to the demand. In fact our printing establishment at this time was beset by difficulties. The machinery of the *Argus* had been brought back to town, its printers and Kaffir-power accompanying it. Our editorial quarters had to be changed, a new machine hired, fresh printers to be obtained from volunteer and military ranks, a dearth of paper and a drought of printing-ink fought against, the limited supply of compositor and other power ebbing daily; but, determined as we were to carry out a project to make our issues 'a record of the siege of Pretoria' of not less than forty numbers, we struggled on, and succeeded in doing so. It necessitated the actual manual work of Deecker and myself, and one issue of the paper was rolled with ink and pulled, copy after copy, in the machine by ourselves, the compositors' military duties compelling their absence elsewhere.

The patron saint of Ireland was not forgotten in the Carabineer lines, and St. Patrick's Day was duly celebrated with speech and song under canvas awnings through which the rain descended to the detriment of our grog, by watering it too much; and the great enthusiasm of the assembled company manifested itself in cheers given again and again with a forty-lung power, which no doubt carried the sounds to the ridge at our west wing, where the Boers were industriously at work building defences to their new laager.

An arrangement was now made for the conveyance

of letters through the Boer lines during the armistice, which it was conceded did exist; and a flood of correspondence immediately followed. All letters had to be viséd by the Garrison Commandant, and left open for similar inspection by the Boer leaders. But, prior to this arrangement, I had given verbally an address to a young lady whose father had obtained for her a safe-conduct pass, and was awaiting her in the Boer lines. This address—that of a Cape Town friend—I had requested her to write to when opportunity offered, instructing him to telegraph to Europe that I was up to then all right in Pretoria. She did so, I afterwards learned; but her letter did not reach my Cape friend as soon as one of my own subsequently forwarded. But I accept the will for the deed, and hope some opportunity of the future will afford me a chance to acknowledge her kindness. Her departure and that of a friend and companion of hers created quite a miniature sensation; the young ladies, convoyed by Captain Sampson, and a Wesleyan clergyman who afterwards did duty as postman between our camp and the Boer lines, moved out, the observed of all observing, the last person to wish them *bon voyage* being Sir Owen Lanyon himself.

Events were now thickening, and the story of Captain Elliott's death and its cruel method was brought in, and excited no small amount of general indignation. I tried to get the *Staats Courants* that had been sent in from the authorities, but failed at first in doing so. There seemed to be a hesitancy about letting the worst be known, but in a few days another feeling seemed to have become paramount, and the whole of the despatches

contained in the Boer gazettes, carefully translated, were published, together with a *précis* of all that had occurred during Colley's operations in advancing, as far as the lights of our information could be trusted to reveal them. This *précis* I compiled myself, and it cost me no little trouble to condense the materials at my command within the limited space of our columns. Simultaneously with the publication of this *précis*, a supplement to a Diamond Fields paper reached the District Office, and its telegraphic advices contained the announcement of General Colley's death and British reverse on Amajuba Hill. Sir Owen Lanyon gave me all the particulars he could of what they had learned, and an 'extraordinary' issue of our journal made the camp residents as wise as we were ourselves, and helped to dissipate the thousand and one extraordinary statements that were being freely disseminated; and everyone knew now the worst they had to face, and those who had anything seriously at stake began to view the position of affairs with deepest gravity.

The flags of the garrison hung at half-mast to the memory of General Colley, who I well remembered amongst my audience one evening in Maritzburg; and I think I am safe in assuming that the evening I allude to was the last occasion he attended a public entertainment, the breaking out of the war in the Transvaal following quickly after my departure from Natal. The authorities and garrison at Pretoria sympathized with his untoward fate, and his administrative capacity was invariably admitted as beyond yea or nay; though from a military standpoint he had his arch critics, who scarcely allowed

his body to become cold before they began to discover his mistakes. At the time I write of we had too little information to enable these clever censors to do more than inveigh against those movements which they debited him with in anticipation.

The waggon laager at the west side of the camp was drawn in behind a strip of brick building, and some extra energy was thrown in to the strengthening of our position; a shallow trench dug in front of the Mounted Infantry and Volunteer lines, and still further in our western front a few little block-houses to hold ten men erected—all of which activity I fancy was the result of a statement made to our reverend postman by the Boers at the new laager, that they had taken the fort at Potcheffstroom and its two nine-pounder guns.

Despite all this, the camp residents attended in large numbers at the Beleaguered Theatre, and laughed as heartily as ever at the vagaries of a Christy Minstrel troupe one evening; dramatic farces, with Sergeant —— of the Fusiliers, and Gunner —— of the Artillery, in the leading *rôles*, another; while on a third, the children of the Loretto Convent Schools occupied the camp tables that formed the stage, and gave quite a successful display of their musical acquirements, not the least interesting feature of which consisted in a chorus of juveniles of from four to six years old, at whose efforts people absolutely screamed with delight, and the little vocalists expanded their diminutive lungs and gave forth their 'Pussy Cats' Tea Party,' happily oblivious to the fact that a few weeks longer of their holiday-time—and a great old holiday it was for them—would

result in bringing them face to face with gaunt famine, and their fathers to possible death from Boer bullets between-times.

The hundredth day of our investment, the 26th of March, passed quietly; and the following day Mrs. Bok and Mrs. Jorissen, the wives respectively of the State Secretary and Attorney-General of the Boer Republic, left Pretoria, and were escorted as far as the Red House Laager. An attempt was made to cast odium on our authorities in regard of these ladies, it being freely stated in Boer circles, both outside and inside our camp, that they had been forcibly detained and kept as prisoners. I mentioned this to Colonel Gildea, and it had the same effect upon him that the long pole is supposed to produce upon 'Grizzly' in the 'Zoo.' 'I offered myself,' he said emphatically, 'to drive them to Heidelberg, or to give them my own conveyance to go there if they wished, with safe-conduct passes and an escort; but they elected to stay of their own free will; and there was ample time given to everybody to leave who desired to do so, the day martial law was proclaimed.'

One of these ladies on reaching the Boer lines stated that she was confined in the Tronk (gaol), badly fed—no milk, no butter, etc. That she was in the Tronk enclosure was an indisputable fact, but so also were some 550 other members of the civil population of Pretoria; and as to the complaints about milk and butter, I presume she was no worse off than others in camp, amongst whom might be included Sir Owen Lanyon himself, at whose table the absence of butter and the

impossibility of procuring it was remarked on, and formed a conversational item on both occasions I enjoyed his hospitality. But the Boer ladies' escort brought back still more important news, to the effect that a provisional peace had been made; and the Colonel said with a rather disappointed air, 'Your occupation will soon be over, Mr. Du Val; I don't think there will be another shot fired,' a prophecy which proved a very true one.

Two remarkable letters were included in the translated despatches contained in the *Staats Courants*, or Boer gazettes, received by the authorities; and although it has never been my intention to extend the scope of this work to a political history of the Transvaal War, I venture to quote them in order to show how near peace they were on the Drakensberg when war was raging its fiercest, and how the delay of another day in Colley's advance would have saved his own life, and the disgrace to our arms at Amajuba Hill.

On the 21st of February, Sir George Colley wrote from his Army Headquarters:

'*To the Honourable P. Kruger.*

'SIR,

'I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 12th inst. In reply, I must inform you that as soon as the Boers now in arms against her Majesty's authority discontinue their armed resistance, her Majesty's Government is prepared to appoint a commission with extensive powers which may develop the scheme alluded to in Lord Kimberley's telegram of

the 8th inst., and which was communicated to you by his Honour President Brand. I must add that if this proposal is accepted within forty-eight hours from and after the receipt of this letter, I have empowered a cessation of hostilities on our side.

'G. POMEROY COLLEY,
'*Major-General, High Commissioner.*'

MR. PAUL KRUGER,
President of the Transvaal and Member of the Boer Triumvirate.

In an ox-waggon travelling country it takes time to convey despatches, and, as ill-luck would have it, Paul Kruger was not at Heidelberg when this missive did arrive, as will be seen from his reply, which was as follows:

'Government House,
'February 28th, 1881.

To His Excellency Sir G. Pomeroy Colley, Major-General, Governor, etc.

'EXCELLENCY,

'Your letter of the 21st February, 1881, reached me to-day, the 28th February, when I arrived back from an inspection. In conjunction with the members of the Government here, I have the satisfaction in my own and their name to inform you that we are very thankful for the declaration of your Excellency in the name of the Government of her Majesty, that under certain conditions they are prepared to stop hostilities; that it appears to us that now for the first time since the unhappy day of the annexation, an opportunity occurs of coming to a friendly settlement; that our heart bleeds for the necessity of shedding further blood, as well the blood of our burghers, as that of your brave soldiers; that in our opinion a meeting of committee-men from both sides would perhaps speedily lead to a satisfactory result. We therefore have the honour to propose that committeemen shall be chosen by you and us with suitable authority to establish and ratify an honourable peace.

'I have, etc.,

'S. P. J. KRUGER, *Vice President.*

'W. Eduard Bok State Secretary.'

Meantime, on the 27th of February, the very day before this reply was penned, Sir George had scaled Majuba

Hill, with what result the world had already known fully a fortnight before it reached the ears of the astonished garrison of Pretoria. And now that it had reached our forces, with the addendum of an announced provisional peace, and strong prospects of retrocessing the country to the Boers without an assertion of British supremacy, growls of annoyance were to be heard throughout camp and laager, which, as the evening fell on what may be termed the concluding day of our investment, the 28th of March, reached a positive roar; popular discontent warmed up to fever-heat in the volunteer camps, and more serious results were only prevented by the opening of the effigy safety-valve; and a shapeless stuffed figure, well steeped in petroleum, and labelled with the name of the British Premier, was consigned to the flames, and its blazing embers hurled up to the Garrison Square, to the absolute danger of the tents and bungalows around. It was almost equally dangerous to endeavour to quell the excitement this effigy-burning created, and, venturing to expostulate with one semi-inebriated firebrand on the folly of jeopardizing the camp, I received a blow across the back of the head from a piece of half-burnt board he was carrying, with a gentle hint that I was a traitor of no unpronounced colour. I did not take his attentions with the spirit of a Samuel, but tried the effects of the butt of my revolver on his inebriated skull, with the result of minimizing his powers for evil for the rest of that evening.

I found the two Colonels, Bellairs and Gildea, at the Garrison Office, watching the demonstration with some anxiety; but order was in the main shortly restored,

although from that hour an absence of the stricter discipline that had hitherto obtained was noticeable throughout the volunteer camps.

At seven o'clock a report reached the Garrison Office, flashed down by signal, that three officers, messengers from Sir Evelyn Wood, were coming through the 'poorts.' I went on foot across the Garrison Square, and met them at the flagstaff. The Colonel returned with them, having ridden out for the purpose of bringing them in. They were two 92nd Highlanders, Lieutenants Cunninghame and Menzies, and an officer of the 60th Rifles, Lieutenant Ryder, accompanied by three guides. They had ridden up from Newcastle in four days. The first-named communicated in a few brief words all that he had to tell. He said, 'Peace proclaimed; Royal Commission ordered; no further fighting.' And later on we were more mystified, and suppositions of all kinds was set going, when rumour stated 'an Afrikander to be appointed Governor, and an armed peace to exist during the sitting of the Royal Commission.'

The prevailing sentiment was indignation throughout the camp; not entirely grounded on interested feelings, for many who had no personal stake in the retention of the country were louder in their expressions of dissatisfaction than those who had ventured all on the faith of governmental promises to retain it—promises that now seemed in imminent danger of severe methods of fracture. 'Give them back the country,' said a quartermaster of volunteers, 'by all means—they have fought well, and deserve to have their spirit acknow-

ledged; but first establish the supremacy of British arms, if only for the sake of our prestige throughout South Africa.' These and similar expressions found vent throughout the lines of Pretoria; and though cooler moments and subsequent reflection led me to modify my preconceived opinions, as I turned into my waggon at the close of this eventful day, I felt the effects of the general depression of my comrades, and I, though by no means an advocate for the wholesale annihilation of Boerdom (in good truth, rather possessing a feeling of sympathy for them, though reprobating their method of redressing their grievances), would willingly have borne further difficulty, deprivation, and danger, if by so doing we could have cancelled the agreements made on the Drakensberg, and prevented the signing of a treaty of peace while the blood of our countrymen was still warm on the jagged slopes of Majuba Hill.

CHAPTER VIII.

ARRIVAL OF JOUBERT—BREAKING-UP OF CAMP—LETTERS FROM HOME—THE GREAT GOLD ROBBERY—TOWN AGAIN—ARRIVAL OF SIR EVELYN WOOD—RETURN OF THE COLOURS—DEPARTURE OF THE '94TH'—BRITISH EXODUS—'HORSE SICKNESS'—BOER NAACHTMAAL—PREPARING TO 'TREKK'—SOME NICE POINTS OF LAW—OUR ZULU 'BOYS'—LEAVING PRETORIA.

THE morning following the arrival of Sir Evelyn Wood's messengers, Glynn wakened me up with the intelligence that the country was to be returned unconditionally, and very wrathfully the 'fighting Lieutenant' of Nourse's Horse gave vent to his feelings on the subject; and when the terms of the armistice were posted on the notice-board at the Garrison Office, a pæan of general indignant remonstrance went up to the skies from camp, laager, and redoubt. One enthusiastic individual had gone to the expense of having some hundreds of handbills printed, headed by the startling query, 'Were the "94th" massacred or not?' and was distributing his anti-Boer pamphlets with an energy which was evidently the result of powerful enthusiasm. His was a case of a *bonâ-fide* investor who had sunk his all in farm-lands and stock in the Transvaal, under the impression that the country would be retained by the English Government; and, now with

every prospect of a return of Boer rule, he was almost beside himself in the anger he felt at being, as he emphatically expressed it, 'so cursedly sold.' There were not only in Pretoria, but throughout the Transvaal, numbers of similar cases to his, and undoubtedly they came under the category of those deserving the fullest compensation; but there were others of moneyless speculators, or such as were quite prepared to stand the hazard of the die, and who now might be seen metaphorically wringing their hands with grief, and the loudest of all in describing their enormous actual and prospective losses, which I was often led to think existed only in their own vivid imaginations. Adding fuel to the flame of general discontent came a district order, noticing the civil occupants of the camp that they might now return to town, which notification immediately followed the arrival of the Boer Commandant Joubert, an event taking place about ten o'clock in the forenoon. Feeling a decided curiosity to see this South African Cromwell, apart from a natural desire to secure any further floating information that was on the breeze, I strode rapidly down to the Garrison Square, and thence to the District Office—and what a sight was there! The Commandant of the Transvaal District, Colonel Bellairs, a handsome old officer, attired in his blue undress surtout, all braided and frogged, his cap heavily gold laced, and his whole face, figure, and apparel the picture of a punctilious military man, was engaged in an interpreted conversation with a low-set, stout, coarse-looking Boer, whose sharp, dark eyes, peering out from beneath his beetle-brows, seemed to be

searching everybody and everything he looked at with suspicion and inquiry, and who I knew at a glance was the redoubtable Joubert. He wore a dark-mixture cut-away coat with side pockets, trousers of the same material, over which were drawn long black-leather leggings,

MR. PIET JOUBERT,
Commander-in-Chief of the Boers and Member of the Triumvirate.

buttoned up high above the knee; a short, blackish-brown stubbly whisker and beard, reddish face, and small, dark, piercing eyes, whose eyelids screwed themselves close when his expression was observant; and a coarse mouth, which had a passably good expression when he smiled, completed the characteristics of the Boer General, whose head, surmounted by a wide-awake hat, rather

greasy of rim, evidently contained a brain of that stern mould which despised the trappings of war, and looked upon gold lace as a secondary consideration to straight shooting and good skirmishing.

Certainly anything more remarkable than the contrast presented by our District Staff and that of the Boer Commandant could not well be imagined. His followers were equally as plainly attired as himself; indeed, one of them was dressed from head to foot in coarse corduroys, with 'veld schoons' (field shoes) of yellow leather covering his pedal extremities. Joubert did not waste much time, but having transacted his business as briefly as possible, accepted Colonel Gildea's acknowledgments of his safe-conduct offer to that officer's supposed widow, and exchanged an infinitesimal amount of other conversation with a favoured few, he galloped off, followed by his staff, some of whom fairly realized the description applied by Falstaff to his ragged regiment, though others might be characterized as passably well turned out; one, evidently the 'Beau Brummell' of the party, actually revelling in a claret-coloured velvet coat and waistcoat to match. Nor were their mounts of that weight-carrying, hard-fed character to warrant the assumption of their working through another campaign; in point of fact, their horses looked little better than our own, and had evidently done a stiff amount of hard labour, receiving more pricks of the spur than bundles of forage for their pains. One or two of Joubert's aides-de-camp used most primitive saddles, of evident home manufacture, and in the construction of which the skin and fleece

of a sheep played a prominent part. Despite all their disadvantages, they had shown by the severest of lessons what could be done with the rifle when used by those whose instinct and training, as hunters and in the experience of Kaffir warfare, had made every man a marksman; and any disposition I might have felt to smile at their very unwarlike appearance was stifled by the respect I felt for their achievements on the Drakensberg.

The exodus from camp back to town now set in, and though not so vigorously carried out as that from town to camp some four months before, was still performed with celerity, and those who had houses to return to lost no time in exchanging their temporary homes for the more solid shelter of brick walls and tiled roofs; the Government meanwhile arranging to continue, by the aid of the ward-masters, a system of rationing for a few days, until the markets re-opened, which they did in a short time, the Boers coming in with their produce in the same phlegmatic way that had always been their wont, and as though nothing to disturb the ordinary course of events had transpired in the interval.

I was astonished one morning, shortly after the cessation of hostilities, to find the Market Square full of Boer waggons, and a brisk trade in forage, mealies, Boer meal, fowls, etc., going forward, and at but a slight advance upon the ordinary prices. Nor was there a trace of exultation to be seen in the immovable facial expression of the Boers themselves, who talked quietly, principally together, but with perfect freedom;

and when in the stores reverted to their invariable custom of shaking hands with everyone therein, friend and late foe alike.

The volunteers were disbanded, and received the public acknowledgments of the authorities — the Carabineers coming in for special thanks for their services. The last issue of our little journal was printed in the office of *De Volkstem*, the organ of the Transvaal Boers, the editor of which, with a good deal of personal courtesy, came to our rescue to complete the 40th issue, so as to bring the number of our bound files up to the announced quantity. These bound editions, some 200 in number, interleaved with photographs of the camp, were the special property of subscribers, to whom they have probably since proved interesting mementoes of Pretoria's investment, and a fairly dependable memoir of the chief events of the Transvaal War.

The wounded survivors of the 94th, and the first mails for the four previous months, arrived almost simultaneously; so Pretoria had two sensations in one day—both welcome ones, for the presence amongst us of those who for months past had been bearing their wounds and injuries uncomplainingly under their canvas homes at Bronkhorst Spruit was as much appreciated by the garrison as were the missives from Europe, which spoke as with the voices of friends re-awakened into life, whose long silence had seemed unaccountable.

The Postmaster-General came, too—he had been hovering between the Free State and Natal during the

war, and now arrived to put postal matters into some sort of form. I went into the Post Office with him, and the interior presented a sight never to be forgotten. The whole floor, with the exception of a small space at the inquiry opening and the pigeon-holes for letters, was covered some feet deep with newspapers—thousands on thousands of them—and the sight of so much news, from which we had been debarred so long, was too much for me, and in spite of Postmaster-General and clerks, or the encumbrance of my long boots, spurs, and other accoutrements, I took a header into the typographical mass of intelligence, and had a good roll therein.

I rode back to camp with the new-found treasures of European letters and papers of the previous November, this first instalment being from the mails that should have come through in December, and I had quite a 'feast of reason and flow of soul' in the perusal of items five months old.

I noticed on my way back that the 'Veld' between the town and camp was liberally bestrewn with soldiers who had arrived from one of the Transvaal garrisons, and who having been kept in a state of compulsory teetotalism during the time they were cooped up in their fort, had been making up for lost time on arriving at Pretoria, much to the satisfaction of Messieurs the Canteen-keepers, who were nimbly pocketing the shillings of their defenders in exchange for 'Cape Smoke,' 'Natal Rum,' and 'square-face.' I never saw so many men *hors de combat* in any of our engagements around Pretoria, as were now to be met with dotted

over the 'Veld,' in side gardens, anywhere and everywhere; and it struck me that the stretcher-bearers would have a much more busy time of it now peace was proclaimed than was their wont whilst 'the din of war was in the air.'

Lying in my waggon on the morning of the 2nd of April, digesting the 'latest news' (this time within three months of date), I was suddenly made aware that Fry (now sergeant in the Carabineers) had come in, and was exhibiting a large piece of virgin gold, which he held in the palm of his hand and dangled, as though to form an estimate of its weight.

'Hallo!' said I; 'where did you get that?'

'From one of the artillerymen, who wants me to buy it,' replied he.

'And where did he get it?'

'He said it was looted from one of the Boer waggons at the capture of the Zwartkopje.'

'The deuce it was!' said I. 'Better make some further inquiry about it.'

He did so by taking it to the quartermaster of the Carabineers, who in his civil capacity held the post of cashier to the Cape Commercial Bank, and who immediately recognised the nugget as a fragment of 200 ounces of gold which had been stolen from the dynamite-room of the camp, where the confiding bank-manager had placed it for safe keeping. Fry pointed out the misguided gunners from whom he had received the piece of gold, who were rapidly charged and 'rammed' into durance vile while other inquiries were made. 'From information received,' an advocate of Pretoria and the Chief-Con-

stable, in a couple of very elegant disguises, came down at night to the camp, and rather gave a shock to my propriety by wandering in at midnight to my waggon on a search for a drink; and the result of their nocturnal survey and eavesdropping was that next morning the fodder and manure-heap near the Artillery stables was dug up, and such a series of 'pockets' discovered as would make the heart of a Californian gold-miner leap for joy. The search was made by the chief-constable and several of his men, most of whom consisted of 'dead beats' whom the closing of the war left 'beam-ended,' and who took up the *rôle* of constable in order to visit the 'Tronk' ('gaol') without waiting to be sent there. It was a beautiful sight to see these gentry, looking like a set of vultures, scraping and picking, turning up lumps of gold occasionally of several ounces in weight, and dropping them gingerly and with evident reluctance into a common iron bucket which the eagle-eyed chief—a Hebrew named Levy—held as a receptacle, and which was more than three-parts filled before the gold-seekers were drawn off. The ingenious warriors who had made this valuable haul showed some ability in the securing of their plunder, and then their clumsiness set in; for it was stated that they had put the nuggets into a bag and sunk them in a water-tank near the hospital, and with a stick and a hook used to fish up their 'swag' and hammer or otherwise break pieces off it to be hawked for sale amongst people in the camp, and by their last transaction in gold-trading with Sergeant Fry had invoked the gyve, the gaol, and in all probability the treadmill.

'Stop the supplies and dethrone the prince.' The

supplies were stopped on the 4th of April, and although the prince was not exactly dethroned, many a volunteer who had done his duty like a man had the privilege of enjoying the somewhat æsthetic morning meal defined by one of them as a 'musical breakfast,' which he explained as consisting of a glass of water and a walk with the band of the Fusiliers. The sudden stoppage of the rations naturally produced serious difficulties to many, and especially to those who had failed to husband their pay or keep a stock of money ready for such an emergency as now presented itself.

Deecker and myself struck our tents, and removed from the camp to an empty house near the town. It was one story high, very small, consisting of three rooms and a species of kitchen, which comprised all its apartments; and for this sumptuous residence we bargained with the proprietor to pay him the sum of £7 per month. My *confrère* was well off, being the fortunate possessor of an iron bedstead, damaged in one leg certainly, but possessing bedding, etc.; and he also rejoiced in the intense luxury of a chest of drawers. I made shift with a camp stretcher, army blankets, karosses of skins, and a real feather pillow, which, with a freedom peculiarly South African, I had 'annexed' or 'jumped' from the hotel at the outbreak of the war; and I slept as comfortably as in the downiest of beds enshrouded with silken curtains or cloth of gold. The remains of our printing plant, copies of journal, etc., embellished our drawing-room, whose sole furniture consisted of an apology for a table and various empty soap-boxes and small packing-cases which served as chairs. But we

were exceptionally comfortable, having enough to eat, a rill of water at our doorstep to drink, and a bottle or two of cognac to mix with it to prevent any ill effects that taking it unadulterated might produce. My Hottentot groom and a Kaffir named 'Jim' slept outside, and made themselves generally useful when there was any cooking going on and consequent eating to follow; and my 'cob'—the only one now left out of my team of nine waggon-pulling equines with which I entered Pretoria the previous November—was housed in a broken-down shanty with a battered iron roof, which the landlord of our 'villa residence' was pleased to denominate the 'stable.'

The novelty of living again in a house, apart from the uppish feeling of grandeur it produced, made us quite satisfied with our dwelling, and although a paucity of knives and forks, or the absence of delf plates, dishes, and cups, might be construed by particular people to mean all kinds of things inimical to a high tone of civilization, we didn't find the broiled bones any less succulent and appetizing because eaten from tin platters, or the coffee less refreshing when drunk from mess porringers. In fact there is no better preparation in the morning for what is called in America 'a good square meal,' than to have to chop a log of wood into the requisite amount of chips wherewith to light your matutinal fire; and the carrying of a few cans of water from a far-off sluit produces appreciation for the contents of your coffee kettle when it does at length come steaming up.

On the evening of the 6th April, the booming of

cannon and salvoes of artillery heralded the advent of Sir Evelyn Wood, and quite martial was his reception. So much so indeed that any stranger might have supposed the leader of a successful relieving force instead of the signatory of a somewhat inglorious peace treaty was making his entry; and as the long-expected General rode into the town, followed by Mounted Infantry in new uniforms with drawn swords and clattering scabbards, the guns thundering forth their loud-mouthed welcomes, the contrast the disciplined *cortége* presented to that of the successful Boer Commandant on his arrival a few days before, forced itself upon the mind of every onlooker; and thinking of Laing's Nek, Ingogo, and Majuba Hill, wonder upon wonder grew as to how these reverses came about.

A little bearded, round-shouldered man, on a small cobby horse, with Sir Owen Lanyon riding on the one side and Colonel Bellairs on the other, both of whom, as well as their mounts, towered above him and his steed—I found it difficult to realize that I saw before me the Major-General, whose praises for fighting qualities were on every tongue during the previous war in Zululand. Nor was this sceptical feeling removed when next day, in company with Deecker, I waited on Sir Evelyn to make a proposal to him on behalf of my *confrère* and myself to undertake the publication of the whole text of the Royal Commission inquiry, a proposal which he entertained favourably enough; but which subsequently fell through owing to the difficulty of fixing the actual place where the business of the commissioners would be carried out. He said, 'You are about the fortieth depu-

tation I have conversed with to-day, and I am beginning to get a little addled; but I will forward your application by wire to Sir Hercules Robinson, and as far as I can assist you in the way of transport from Maritzburg for anything you want to bring up from there, and any further help that I can afford I shall be happy to give to you.' Our interview was brief; nor did we think it fair to endeavour to prolong it, seeing that the General was evidently tired, worn out with travel, his eyes bloodshot, and his whole manner exhibiting fatigue and weariness.

The following day the flags of the '94th,' which had been in the safe keeping of the Scots Fusiliers since the eventful morning of Egerton's arrival at Pretoria, were handed back to their rightful owners amid a scene of enthusiasm that galvanized a feeling of sentiment into the most phlegmatic of dispositions; and the senior Captain of the '94th,' as he received his colours from the hands of his comrades in arms, was so evidently impressed as to find difficulty in uttering a few words of reply acknowledging his obligations. All the wounded survivors of the fatal action of Bronkhorst Spruit were present, many with their arms in slings, some with head-bandages on, and not a few with sticks and crutches for supports; and lustily they cheered for the Colonel and his Scots Fusiliers, who had carried their regimental colours entwined with their own, whilst they, wounded and shattered, waited wearily at the Honde River for the joyful intelligence that their hour of freedom had come at last. Accompanying the convoy now destined for Natal were the ladies I have referred

to previously; and as the waggons moved off, played out by the band of the Fusiliers stationed on their line of march, the enthusiasm of troops and spectators warmed up; and when the wounded men who were convalescent enough to walk passed on foot, the cheering became so general as to disarrange the brass instrumentation of the bandsmen, many of whom withdrew their clarionets, French horns, or euphoniums, to give the full aid of their lungs and voices to swell the 'send-off' shout in honour of their departing comrades.

I rode out through the 'poort' with the column, and having wished them 'God-speed,' etc., safe journey to Natal, and said 'good-bye' to Dr. Ward, to whose skill and care in the past many a man marching alongside that day owed his life, I turned my horse's head, reflecting on the absolute certainty of our never again meeting under similar conditions. The next evening the volunteers of Pretoria were paraded, and addressed by Sir Evelyn Wood, who also inspected all the military branches of the garrison. The scenes at the volunteer parades were remarkable chiefly for the enthusiasm they evoked, the Major of Engineers who commanded the Convent Redoubt being forcibly lifted out of the saddle by his men and carried by them shoulder-high half round the town, until they deposited him high and dry on the counter of the principal hotel bar. Nothing would do the irrepressible citizen soldiers but a 'speech from the Major;' and he, though considerably blown by his recent mode of progression, replied in humorous and well-chosen words. The 'European' bar was now the centre, the focus of 'British interests,' and events past,

present, and of possible futurity were discussed in the fullest and airiest manner to the usual accompaniments of 'shilling' drinks. Here I met Commandant Raaff, the Sheriff, whose seizure of Bezeidenhout's waggons had brought the previous blind boil of smouldering discontent up to the carbuncle stage of suppurating rebellion, shortly to exhibit the still more advanced condition of open revolt. He told me that he had been taken prisoner by the Boers in the Magistrate's Court at Potcheffstroom, where Major Clarke, himself, and a handful of soldiers and volunteers had been hemmed in; and provisions giving out, they had given in.

The Boers evidently considered the Sheriff Commandant an especially dangerous foe; and so, from the hour of his capture at the commencement of hostilities, till his release a few days before I met him, he had enjoyed the privilege of steel bracelets on the wrists, the paternal Boer General supplying these ornaments with an amount of unction that suggested handcuff manufacture as an industry in which he probably felt the keenest interest. Raaff did not look any the worse from his long incarceration, but seemed to greatly regret that his services had been lost during a time when they might have materially benefited the governing authorities.

From him I learned that Potcheffstroom Fort had been surrendered on the 21st March; but the fact of an armistice having been concluded on the 6th of that month, with the proviso of eight days' rations to be sent in to all beleaguered garrisons, was concealed from the worn-out troops holding the miserable earthwork,

who, having exhausted their supplies and eked out life on mealies and water until actual famine stared them in the face, had no other choice but to yield their little stronghold, the honours of war being magnanimously accorded by the wily Boer Commandant, who had fairly tricked them into surrendering.

An uneventful week succeeded Sir Evelyn Wood's arrival, during which things became more ship-shape in the town of Pretoria; and the auctioneers had plenty to sell, but buyers were neither numerous nor wealthy. A decided exodus of loyal residents had developed itself, and each day saw families and travelling parties 'trekking' away, some to Natal and others to the Diamond Fields, the general opinion being held that the war would be recommenced through probable hitches liable to crop up in the final settlement of the Royal Commission.

I was, personally, busy enough with correspondence, the forwarding of copies of our little journal to home and colonial newspapers, which we afterwards found contained many cuttings from the *News of the Camp*. A lengthy description of our beleaguerment I had specially compiled and preserved duplicates of, which I simultaneously forwarded to all the leading papers of South Africa, most of whom published the description.

At the end of this week of comparative quiet my misfortunes began to commence. First, my groom absconded, which, however, was no very serious matter; then my horse, the last of my gallant team, died from that villanous equine curse of the Transvaal, 'horse

sickness,' and this was to me a real loss. To begin with, he was the only one I had left, and horses were now most difficult to obtain, and only to be got at fancy prices; and secondly, I had a sort of comrade-like feeling for the brute that had carried me so well, and often shared my danger from flood, field, and foe. When, therefore, early in the afternoon the disease showed itself, I led him out to the open 'Veld' at the west of the town, and went back for my carbine, with the full intention of putting him out of a misery, all the chances of which I knew were in favour of a fatal ending. Some young Dutch lads who had been serving with their fathers on the Drakensberg, persuaded me to give him a chance; and I left for a few hours, and on my return was surprised and delighted to find that he was not only alive, but that the discharge from the nostrils, the outward evidence of the disease, had all but ceased. I went to the house where I knew the young Dutch lads were, and discovered them sleeping outside. They wakened up, found an old halter, lent me a pair of blankets, and proceeded with me to where my poor brute was standing, sheltered by a couple of mimosa thorns. I sheeted him up, threw the halter over his head, and led him down to our 'villa;' and in the shanty of a stable placed him for the night, adding another blanket to those good-naturedly lent by the young Boers.

I turned in myself towards two o'clock with a fairly assured hope that 'Napoleon,' as I called him, would pull through, and I should be the proud possessor of a 'salted' horse when I rose at early morning.

But 'alas and alack' and 'well a day,' as the old English ballads have it, there was nothing but lamentation for me, when the morning sunrise showed me my bay cob lying outside his stable-door, a froth of white foam round his nostrils which told me too truly that I should never again bestride his willing back, or encourage him to take a flying leap over the water-furrows of Pretoria, many a time our 'brook-jumps' in rides about the town and camp.

A horse is a great companion, and when his temper is good, and disposition willing, there is no better or truer friend, whether the journey be long or short, the road rough or smooth; and seeing my poor cob dragged away by a span of bullocks to become food for the vultures, was a sight I did not behold without regret; and the following lines of a true sportsman and soldier, the laureate of horse and hound, recalled themselves forcibly to me:

'There are men, both good and wise, who hold that in a future state,
Dumb creatures whom we cherished here below
Will give us joyous greeting when we pass the golden gate.
Is it folly if I hope it may be so?'

The next day (Saturday) the Boers came in and filled the Market Square and its approaches with their waggons, and I learned that the morrow was to be their 'Naachtmaal,' and hence the gathering. Every waggon contained 'vrows' and 'kinders' (wives and children); and tents were pitched, fires lighted, and the old Dutch church was once more the centre of a camp —this time, an army of peace and thanksgiving, for

your genuine Boer is equally pious in peace as in war, and his faculty in the way of pious despatches during the previous hostilities was very pronounced. Indeed, it seemed rather difficult to say whether those of the German Emperor in the Franco-Prussian War or Joubert's description of the Drakensberg engagements contained the most piety and religious fervour, for both assumed that the destruction and death of their enemies was the special work of the Almighty; whilst the unhappy French Chasseur at Gravelotte, as well as the shattered Highlander on Majuba Hill, might in all probability put forth his claim with equal justice for the annihilation of his Teuton or Boer enemies.

The Dutch church was crowded with a quiet undemonstrative congregation—the most excited person in the building being the preacher, who was evidently haranguing his hearers with powerful enthusiasm; a physical effort he might have well spared himself, judging from the effects produced on the sluggish, slow-thinking crowd before and around him, who, as far as could be noted by their demeanour, were to a degree apathetic.

I left him in the throes of a peroration, the tones of which could be heard throughout the Market Square, and taking a turn through the labyrinth of waggons, sought the house of Mr. Jorissen, the Attorney-General of the Boer Government. He was not at home; the house was closed, as it had been any time during the past four months, and my errand, which was to obtain permission to release some property of mine taken from a transport waggon at Heidelberg, I concluded to be a

failure. Next day, however, the ubiquitous Fry borrowed a cart, and acting on his suggestion, I purchased four oxen, and with these dependable brutes and a couple of Zulus to drive and tend them, he started for Heidelberg, secured nearly all the missing property, and returned triumphantly to Pretoria, minus only a couple of small gin-cases, which, in a weak moment, we had used for packing up knickknacks and small things, and the labels on which had been too much for the honesty of the storeroom guards, who must have been disagreeably surprised to find that nothing more drinkable was contained therein than Eno's fruit salt, or a bottle or two of magnesia.

The special artist of a London illustrated paper, who had been making sketches on the Drakensberg, arrived the same day from Heidelberg, and I accompanied him for a drive in a buggy drawn by a pair of horses, which he piloted himself. We went to the Wonderboompoort, the scene of many of our long-range skirmishes of the past few months, and all went merry as the marriage bell until my new artistic friend essayed the crossing of a muddy little drift. The bottom was soft and the bank was quagmire, and he safely landed us in the middle, where the horses stuck; the reins went one way and the artist's hands another, and amidst the most frantic interjections the buggy was at length lifted out by a sudden jerk, which brought it well up on the side of the spruit. I could not forbear observing to the man of illustrative powers, 'Well, I dare say you can draw, but you certainly can't drive,' together with a strong threat that I would send a sketch of our late

predicament to the editor of his journal, to be entitled 'How our special artist drives through the drifts in South Africa.' A good fellow, with many a prior claim to better work, he took his chaff in evident good part, and we returned to town none the worse from our experience of a dead stick in a river-drift.

The days of April wore on, and with them our preparations for 'trekking' were being completed—my waggon put into travelling condition, our commissariat looked after, two more bullocks added to the team, ox-yokes, and yokeskeys, and chains purchased, and things put into ship-shape for our trip down to the Diamond Fields. The distance from Pretoria to this fortune-making haven of speculation was over 300 miles, and our prospective journey by the slow but sure method of draught oxen promised to be a prolonged one. A young fellow, a disbanded Carabineer, joined my party. He was the proud possessor of a two-wheeled vehicle, known colonially as a Scotch cart, though where the connection between it and 'Caledonia stern and wild' exists, I never could make out. Fry and he having invested in four more oxen to draw this North British conveyance, they thought a golden opportunity for a little speculation in the Boer tobacco line had arrived; so roll upon roll of the dried leaves purchased from a local trader were piled up, rumour having brought word that fabulous prices were being given in Kimberley for this smoke-making mixture. Fifteen hundred pounds weight at sixpence a roll was crowded into the Scotch cart, Zulu drivers and 'voorloopers' (leaders) engaged, and everything ready for the start; and the evening of the

25th of April was fixed to say farewell to Pretoria, where for so many previous months we had passed an eventful existence. But 'man proposes,' and to alter the adage, 'the law disposes;' for during the afternoon Grab, once more a civilian, came to me with the startling intelligence that my 'fidus Achates' Fry had been arrested.

Wondering what breach of the law he had been accused of, I immediately went to the magistrate's office, and discovered that it was as a 'material witness' in the great gold robbery, and not as a criminal, that he was retained. The chief-constable and public prosecutor, with an intensely Jack-in-office officiousness, in spite of the chaos reigning, and the utter impossibility of carrying out legal procedure in the transition state of the country, had strained their powers, and in virtue of an affidavit of the latter, placed the ubiquitous Fry under arrest, a position which rendered him extremely wroth and intensely sulky. The next morning I saw the resident magistrate, who, a cantankerous old fossil smothered in his partially regained official self-importance, could give neither satisfactory information or explanation beyond the cut-and-dried one that 'it was the law,' quite oblivious to the fact that it was impossible at the time to administer the best legal procedure that ever was invented. 'Will you tell me,' I said, 'when the trial will come on, where it will be heard, and before what tribunal?' This was a poser; he couldn't tell: it might be before the Magistrates' Court; it might be military court-martial; it might be at the sittings of the High Court—the latter probably; but there was a doubt

as to whether that tribunal would sit again, or it might do so any time inside six months. 'If you will tell me when and where this man will be wanted,' I said, 'I will have him here, and give you £200 bail for his return—that is to say if his evidence is really so material—for I understand you have ample witnesses without him, and it seems the most outrageous thing to keep him here, preventing him earning his livelihood, and putting him in gaol like a criminal, without being able to state when, how, or where you intend to avail yourselves of his evidence.'

'All I can say is,' replied irate officialism, stung by the pertinence of my arguments, 'that it is the law, and by the law we must abide.'

Failing with the magistrate, I tried the acting Attorney-General, and though somewhat more agreeable than the sapient R.M., I found him tarred by the brush of officialism to an extent sufficient to render my mission and further arguments a failure. I went up to the 'Tronk' to see 'the material witness,' who, attended by one of the police constables, whom I have already described as 'dead-beats,' wandered in and out of his apartments in gaol, or about the town at his own sweet will and pleasure, his 'orderly,' as he called him, hanging about in his vicinity whithersoever he went. 'He was pretty comfortable,' he said. 'Old Chief Secocoeni occupied a room close by; and,' he added, 'young Prince Secocoeni cleans my boots every morning, and I rather fancy stole a sovereign out of my breeches-pocket last night,' an accusation which I've no doubt

the prince, *when* he reads these lines, will refute with proper scorn and contempt.

An application to the High Court, supported by all the force and legal acumen of an advocate of this sacred tribunal, had the desired effect of securing the liberty of 'the material witness,' the judges, then sitting for the first time since war-times and martial law had abrogated their functions, taking a common-sense view of the matter, and somewhat dashing the magisterial and other official zeal which had so inopportunely displayed itself, and delayed our departure for three full days, all of which had been spent by my comrade in arms and travel under actual arrest and police surveillance.

Having secured his freedom at a cost of some £5, the amount of counsel's fees and other legal expenses, we prepared for the road; and evening saw our oxen 'inspanned,' our drivers ready, 'voorloopers' at the heads of their respective teams, and, amid a warm shaking of hands and reiterated 'good-byes,' we moved slowly away from News of the Camp Villa, the rendezvous of departure.

Our party consisted of the 'Scotch-cart' owner, a young Carabineer named Maughan, Fry, Grab, and myself; and accompanying our small caravan we had my Hottentot groom, 'Jack,' who had returned repentantly; three Zulus, named respectively 'Umquebela,' 'Klaus,' and 'By-and-by;' with a brace of East Indians, or 'coolies,' as the Hindustani importations are universally called in Natal. These latter gentry had spliced themselves on to our party without any permission. One had been mentioned to accompany 'to

cook,' etc., and I had given an unwilling assent; and it was not long before we found he had brought another of the followers of Buddha or Brahma for company.

The Zulus were great amusement to us, especially Klaus, a stout man of about forty years of age, who was going to work at the 'Diamant Veld' (Diamond Field) for the acknowledged purpose of making sufficient money to enable him to buy cattle, to be bartered in turn for an additional 'umfase' (wife) or two. His costume was a study. He wore on his head an old military cap of the Scotch-bonnet pattern, from beneath which a striped night-cap hung, with a bunch of feathers attached, by way of ornament. Two soldiers' red jackets—one worn above the other—and a row of meercats' teeth for a necklet about completed his apparel; and his long black legs looked irresistibly ludicrous as a continuation to the red tunics in which his body was wrapped. He stalked along ahead, leading the four bullocks drawing the Scotch cart, which, piled up with Boer tobacco, led the van; my waggon and oxen, driven by Jack, next; and then, marching on foot, my party and myself, forming a sort of rear-guard; the Indian coolies lagging still farther behind.

The night was, as South African nights at this time of the year generally are, clear, cool, and starlit; and, plodding slowly along, we left Pretoria behind us, and moved forward to the 'poort,' the lights of the military camp which had been so long our home glimmering away on the right. There was a touch of sadness over the party at leaving the many acquaintances and friends our long stay in Pretoria had created; and as we threaded

the 'poort,' evading the remains of the wire-entanglements so lately laid on either side of the narrow centre-path, the many early-morning halts we had made there, the recollections of our fights and reconnaissances, the pleasant comrades whose dangers we had shared, and the curious sights and scenes of our previous camp-life, crowded though they were, came most vividly upon the imagination, creating quite a painful feeling of regret, as silently we trudged along, half smothered in the dust raised by our bullock-teams, every instant leaving Pretoria farther and farther behind, its odd reminiscences alone travelling with us, to be as landmarks standing out boldly and ineffaceably in the broad highway of memories past and gone.

CHAPTER XXX.

'TREKKING' WITH OXEN—A FALL IN TOBACCO—KROKODIL RIVER—MALCOLM'S GRAVE—POTCHEFFSTROOM—SCENES OF THE WAR—THE FORT AND TRENCHES—A PICTURE GALLERY—KLERKSDORP—A BASUTO CHIEF—BLOEMHOF—A RENCONTRE WITH BOERS—CROSSING THE VAAL RIVER—DUTCH COURAGE—THE DIAMOND FIELDS ONCE MORE.

We had not left the 'poort' many minutes behind us before we discovered another addition to the party in the shape of a lame Kaffir, who, on cross-examination, turned out to be a cousin, or brother, or other near relative of our 'voorlooper,' the martial Klaus. How he had managed to stump along with us was a mystery, as one leg and foot appeared swollen enough to resemble that of an elephant; and though much averse to having any further demands on our limited commissariat, the dead lameness combined with the gameness of the Kaffir induced me to tell the others of the party to give him a lift on the Scotch cart, which he mounted with amazing agility, and at once spread himself comfortably out on the rolls of tobacco it contained. The night was dark, and the roads were the ordinary species of wretched tracks, only a little worse than usual owing to the stoppage of traffic during the war, and the consequent absence of those rut-grinding-down machines

known as ox-teams. We heard an alarm ahead, and running up, discovered the Scotch cart at an angle of forty-five degrees, from which a forward jerk of the bullocks toppled it over, with the result of the lame Kaffir, the Boer tobacco-rolls, some saddles, and a large bag of mealie meal being liberally distributed over the adjacent 'Veld.' There was nothing for it but to off-load the cart, get it up on its perpendicular, and then set about refurnishing it with its contents, now all at sixes and sevens—the oxen meanwhile being unyoked and 'bossed-up' close at hand.

The first part of the work was comparatively easy, but the reloading of the tobacco was attended by such 'sneezing' fits as had never before been heard on that part of South Africa's 'Veld.'

The Zulus, though a snuff-taking race, were none the less proof to the olfactory titillation the work produced, and chorussed nasally the 'aitch-you,' 'aitch-you' of the less-seasoned Europeans, who sneezed away with fifty-nose power, as every fresh roll was handed up and packed; while the lame Kaffir, apparently none the worse of his sudden descent to *terra-firma*, quietly nursed his swollen limb and looked on at everything as though it was all a matter of course, his general equanimity not being in the least disturbed. Finding we were in the vicinity of a small river—the very spot where we had met the Mounted Infantry picquet on the occasion when the 'blind Boer' was captured—we pulled the waggons off the road and 'outspanned' for the night; starting at daybreak the next day, and doing a

considerable 'trekk' with the steady, slow-going draught-oxen.

The following morning the first 'trekk,' a three-hours' one, brought us to the Krokodil (Crocodile) River, and a store kept by an Englishman and a Dane, named respectively Edeson and Anderson, at which one of the ugliest crimes in connection with the previous hostilities had taken place, and where a rough cairn of stones marked the last resting-place of an unfortunate Scotchman named Malcolm, who was undoubtedly murdered there by a party of Boers, at the earliest stage of the Transvaal troubles. We found Edeson and Anderson at the store—the former had been in the Carabineers, and with us in Pretoria, and he gave us a very comrade-like welcome; whilst the latter, a capital good fellow, related in the most vivid manner the details of how Malcolm had been done to death—of how he (Anderson) had escaped and hid during the night in the bush on the river-bank, and how he intended to put a stone at the foot of the heap already stacked, with a notice thereon that all might read, 'To the memory of Wm. Malcolm, murdered by Boers,' etc., etc., etc.—a notice that I rather fancy would not be permitted to long remain when the gentry who were responsible for the poor Scotchman's death came to hear of it.

During the afternoon we crossed the river, and the waggon, very heavily laden, seemed to rock and sway, twist and strain to a remarkable degree while moving through the river-drift, and as I followed its track up the opposite bank I noticed chips of wood that looked like particles of the axle-bed falling on the road; so I

hastened up to the front wheels and was just in time to stay the advancing bullocks, who in another minute would have brought the front wheels away from the rest of the vehicle. We unyoked the oxen, off-loaded the waggon just where it stood in the centre of the road, then prized up the front, and got the foremost wheels out, supplying their supporting power by a lot of boxes, baskets, and other paraphernalia. Edeson came over and told us of a Boer blacksmith who lived close by—that is to say about three miles off—to whom Fry, accompanied by Jack and a couple of the Zulus plodded off on foot, leaving Maughan and myself to stretch ourselves on the 'Veld,' and amuse ourselves star-gazing at the semi-tropical sky, comparing the Southern Cross with Orion, much to the disadvantage of the former. Fry shortly returned to say that the blacksmith had finished his labours for that night, which was a Saturday, and would do the necessary work on the following Monday. No power on earth or persuasion could induce him to do anything more that night, although the required repairs were but a trifling matter in the way of making a couple of iron bolts; and his religious principles, which I have more than once before remarked are extremely rigid and inflexible amongst the Dutch Boers, prevented his considering it sufficiently a work of necessity to be performed on the Sunday. So we had to make up our minds, as well as our bodies, to camp as agreeably as we could where we were; and I felt some hazardous doubts cross my mind as I turned into my waggon to sleep, that my slumbers might be broken by a series of collisions with passing teams of oxen, unless their 'voor-

loopers' were attentive, and gave my sleeping apartment a wide berth, standing as it did right in the very centre of the track, and actually inviting a 'smash-up' from the first transport rider who passed during the night. The morning rose bright, cold, and clear; and after a cup of coffee, a swim in the Krokodil River, and a shot or two at a species of grey plover, of which there are several varieties in the Transvaal, I might safely say I was fairly ready for breakfast, which, cooked *al fresco*, Fry doing a little special bread-making on his own account, with a three-legged pot for an oven, and a packet of baking-powder to lighten the dough, formed quite an attractive meal, the more so from the whet given to our appetites by early rising, cold water plunge, and the fresh air around. Anyone who wants to put up a store of useful energy and to enjoy existence—that is, the enjoyment of a free step, a good digestion, and a generally buoyant feeling—to him or them I would say, 'Take a Cape gun over your shoulder, a few friends for company, and go for a six weeks' "trekk" with an ox-waggon "up country" in Southern Africa; and believe me, all the results I have enumerated will surely accrue unless those who experiment in this fashion bring too many 'resources of civilization' with them, and over eat or drink on the road, either of which excesses is equally bad. I found two meals a day ample food—these of the plainest character—seldom any stimulants, spirituous or otherwise. Cocoa or coffee, mealie-meal porridge, griddle cakes of Boer meal, meat broiled on the fire, tinned jams or marmalade, constituted our *cuisine*, on which we throve, fattened, and marched, as a

rule, a dozen or fourteen miles per diem. About midday on the Monday, the wheels came back from the blacksmith; and the waggon, lightened by the departure of the coolies, whose baggage I had discovered weighed several hundred pounds, and which I declined to any longer carry for them, was now made whole again, a rope of 'reims' being carried from the trees to the extremity of the pole as an additional measure of precaution, lest the breaking of the main bolt should take place at some critical pull up, leaving the vehicle behind, whilst master, oxen, and the 'disselboom' (pole) 'trekked' away on their own account.

Our experiences of the road to Potcheffstroom after leaving the Krokodil River were comparatively unimportant. We met and conversed with a few British storekeepers, most of whom expressed considerable dissatisfaction at the result of the war, and who generally chorussed their emphatic intentions of leaving the country, in order to facilitate its absorption by the infernal regions, a fate which appeared to be predicted for it without a dissentient voice by these enterprising traders.

We met also hundreds of natives 'trekking' home to their kraals from the Diamond Fields. They had been working in the mines, and their return had been delayed by the war; and now that a cessation of hostilities had taken place, they were seizing the opportunity to get back with their wonderful rolls of baggage containing all the various articles purchasable at a 'Kaffir truck' store, carried on their heads, and despite which they moved along with light elastic steps that seemed im-

pervious to fatigue. The South African native is, as a rule, a good-humoured fellow, and is prepared to laugh on the smallest provocation, so that a word or two of a chaffing character awakened quite an explosion in the throats of these dusky tourists, who, mostly clad in soldiers' cast-off tunics, swaggered along under their packs with a cheerful disregard for ancient Sol, or the glowing rays of heat he sped down from his midday altitude above. We poor Europeans made it an invariable rule to 'outspan' during the middle of the day, and pulling round our waggon and cart, sought the shelter of their shadow, and devoured the contents of a bundle of English newspapers five months old. 'Ye gentlemen of England who live at home at ease' can never know the height of enjoyment which was often mine during that 'trekk' from the Transvaal, when, lying in the cool shade thrown by my waggon, I ran my eye over an old *Standard* or illustrated paper, extending my legs the while, for one of the Kaffirs, the sturdy Klaus, or the sweet 'By-and-by,' to rub fat into my long boots, an operation which he had no sooner performed than he would utilize his greasy palms by rubbing them dry upon his head and face, exhibiting a proper sense of economy in not allowing any of the grease to go to waste. Some people might think the pomade somewhat degenerated by contact with not over-clean Jack-boots; but the Kaffir is not a sentimentalist, or ultra-sensitive in matters of this kind, and neither his wool nor skin is likely to suffer from a little extra darkening matter; and if he is satisfied, why should we repine?

Exactly a week from the date of our leaving Pretoria, we reached the Mooi River at Potcheffstroom. It was evening, and we determined to 'outspan' outside the town, and cross the river in the morning. We met a good many Boers and their waggons returning from 'Naachtmaal'; and one old fellow seemed greatly pleased at the intelligence that the British residents were leaving Pretoria, and he rubbed his grimy old palms together with evident satisfaction. He was a brilliant-looking regenerator of his country, and looked as though water had been a stranger to him for some years past, whilst soap was entirely unknown. Next morning after breakfast we prepared to go into the town, and our Zulus were all agog with preparation. From the fathomless recesses of some old bags, they produced breeches, shoes, and hats, and were quite enormous 'swells' in their European clothes and their own estimation, as, leading and driving, they worked their teams through the river, and entered Potcheffstroom.

The first place we stopped at was a blacksmith, to negotiate some repairs for the waggon, and very pronouncedly and with due emphasis did this worthy denounce the Boers and their Commandant at Potcheffstroom in language much more forcible than polite. His chief ground of complaint was that they 'commandeered' his services as farrier, and as a consequence he had supplied sets of shoes to about 400 horses, in payment for which he had an interesting collection of autographs of the Boer Commandment, ordering him to supply the shoes, but ignoring altogether the question of emolument to be derived for his outlay of skilled

labour and material. This 'commandeering' is a very simple method of obtaining what you require in war-time, and saves considerable trouble afterwards by avoiding all subsequent disputes and questions of figures, amounts, or other financial troubles.

We went to the Market Square, a rectangular piece of ground, with the Dutch church in the centre; the Court-House, containing the magistrates' offices and postal departments, a long, low building, lying on the far side; a couple of stores, the back of a bank-house, and a fair amount of gardens adjoining, forming its principal surroundings. Here the first shots were fired that opened the Transvaal War, and in the Court-House, which was literally riddled with bullet-holes, and covered with their marks, Major Clarke, Raaff, some soldiers and civilians, took up their quarters on the 16th of December, and maintained an animated fight until the failure of food-supplies, and the impossibility of obtaining relief from the fort being apparent, they surrendered to the Boer leader, after several attempts to fire the thatched roof of the building had been made, and seemed to bid fair to be eventually successful. The Boers had occupied the yard of the bank building and a large store, forming the extremities of a triangle, the point of which was formed by the Court-House; thus the object of a cross-fire, and evidently, from the marks and tokens of lead on the building, a fusillade of a terrific character. The woodwork of the windows and doors was chipped to fragments, and the *mitraille* must have been, while it lasted, a veritable *feu d'enfer*, as the distances were not more than two hundred yards from any of the points of the

triangle. A few of the bullets of the defenders had struck the bank-wall as high as thirty feet from the ground, or about twenty-five above the heads of their opponents; a result which did not reflect much credit on their marksmanship, and only bore out the general opinion freely expressed by the Boers, both before and after the war, that the 'rooi baatje schut neet'—(the red jacket can't shoot). These were the actual words made use of by a Boer Commandant—H. Pretorius—who directed the defence at Elandsfontein, and with whom I had a conversation before leaving Pretoria, and who admitted the superiority of the Mounted Volunteers as marksmen, having been severely wounded by them himself at the engagement just mentioned; earning from their injured foeman the compliment that 'De rooi kops und Blau kops es mooi' (The red heads and blue heads are good)—an allusion to the red and blue puggarees worn by the men of the Pretoria Carabineers and Nourse's Horse.

Having viewed the scene of the conflict inside as well as externally, piloted by a sympathetic Britisher, I went outside the town to view the fort, where for so many days the garrison had been 'stewing in their own grease,' as Bismarck is reputed to have said of the Parisians. An unsightly heap of mud it presented, looking in its now forlorn and dismantled condition about as unprepossessing a place wherein to spend ninety-five days of existence as could well be imagined. It seemed about thirty yards square, and from the corners of its front face, looking towards the town, a couple of bastions abutted, which had evidently con-

tained the nine-pounder guns—its artillery armament —one being allotted to each of these vantage-points. Considerable excavations of the earth had taken place within, and deepened the floor of the work in some places twenty feet below the parapet. A long line of gardens swept out on the right flank of the fort at a distance of about 400 yards, whilst an old gaol and a walled-in graveyard faced it at about a hundred yards' closer range. The Boers had dug a trench from behind this old gaol, which might be said to be within the precincts of the town, to the graveyard, working it with mathematical accuracy, at an angle to enable them to secure a small magazine less than 150 yards to the left-front of the fort. This trench they carried through the graveyard, and out at its farther side, necessitating a counter move on the part of the holders of the fort, who had seized pick and shovel and dug a ditch to the little magazine, where the two trenches ran as close as thirty yards or even less from one another, and where the exhibition of a man's finger must have been attended with danger to the part so exposed. So industriously had the besiegers worked that their trench had threatened to enfilade that of the besieged, who had been compelled to throw out a heavy spur from the little magazine, the iron door of which, riddled with rifle-bullets, gave evidence of the piercing strength of these playthings at such a close range.

Immediately behind the fort some twenty roughly-made graves, the result, as I learned, of night-working by fatigue-parties of the besieged, marked the places where those killed in the defence lay. Nearly 100 out

of the little garrison of 240 were rendered *hors de combat* during its investment, and their position, watched night and day by an enemy excelling as marksmen, must have been an intensely trying one; and during the last few weeks their dragging out of existence on whole mealies and water as their staple food until starvation stared them in the face, speaks more than any words ever can as to the obstinacy and determination of their defence.

So little ever seemed to have been known of the facts connected with Potcheffstroom Fort during the war, that I went minutely over its mud-banked parapets, interior, and trenches, and felt considerable sympathy for its brave defenders who, after so well-sustained a resistance, had been tricked into surrendering—which they undoubtedly were, all word of the provisional peace and eight-day revictualling of the garrisons having been carefully concealed from them—and their only gleam of satisfaction, their only crumb of comfort being the 'honours of war' accorded to them, and permission to march into the Orange Free State, to be interned there.

With the exception of three or four holes knocked out of the old gaol wall, there was little to indicate that in the fort opposite nine-pounder guns had formed a part of their defensive armament; and it was to be fairly presumed that the objection to shell an open town was a paramount one with the officer directing the defence. A house, previously occupied by a Dutch clergyman named Joste, and which lay immediately behind the old gaol, had been set on fire and gutted out, with the ex-

ception of a passage, the walls of which were papered with pictures from the *Graphic* and *Illustrated London News*, patches of which remained intact, though evidently swept and scorched by the flames which must have raged around. A glance at them offered food for reflection, for in one the British infantry were depicted attacking an imaginary fortress at Chatham; and my thoughts immediately reverted to the earthwork which in grim reality they had been tenaciously holding not 500 yards away. Another sketch, entitled 'Valentine's Day—Oh, here's the postman!' was one of the largest and best, and suggested a singular contrast to the leaden messages received on February's 'fourteenth' behind the earthworks beyond. 'The Relief of Paris,' and 'Distribution of the English Gift at Maison Grand Condé, Rue de Seine,' another capital sketch, formed of itself a striking satire on the condition of our poor fellows existing on half a pound of mealies per day, to whom no relief ever came; and a picture of the 'Ruins of the Strasbourg Public Library' was by no means inappropriate to the scorched and blackened walls of the roofless dwelling it ornamented. There was also a piece of an old newspaper, published in 1873, and called the *Transvaal Advocate*, in which the following couplet occurred, evidently part of some satirical verses on Landrosts, or magistrates, which ran thus:

> 'There is no greater truth in the Transvaal than this,
> That wisdom is folly, and ignorance bliss.'

Not a very flattering opinion on the administration of justice in those days.

Business seemed to be more or less paralyzed in Potcheffstroom; but the stores were open, and we had no difficulty in securing a number of extra supplies, in which half a bag of potatoes figured as 'luxuries,' and were proportionately much dearer than any other article of food purchased. As soon as the afternoon sun began to decline, we moved out of Potcheffstroom, and bidding good-bye to its old earthwork and trenches, which now, dismantled and silent, exhibited a remarkable contrast to what it must have presented a few weeks before, we made a long 'trekk' of some four hours' duration; and full of what we had seen and heard, conversed round our bivouac fire, while the Kaffirs had a glorious time and 'high tea,' the chief constituent of which consisted of the internal portions of a sheep they had obtained by a little side speculation of their own.

The next day's 'trekk' brought us in sight of Klerksdorp, a very quiet little Dutch village, either in or adjoining the semi-neutral territory included in the 'Keate award'; and the next morning we 'outspanned' for breakfast in the town. We tried everywhere for fresh meat, but the result was failure; when lo, a ministering angel in the form of a Boer appeared and said he could let me have a leg of pork. I need not say that I closed with his offer, and proceeded with him to secure the fragment of cloven-footed uncleanliness, and in conversatian on the way discovered his brother had been shot by the Boers at Potcheffstroom, who, in a rough and ready manner, declared him to be a spy. There was no second question that the Boers of the Potcheffstroom district, from their Commandant down, were fiercer than

their fellow-comrades elsewhere, and favoured 'war to the knife' as their motto, even to the committal of several outrages, amongst which the death of Malcolm, the shooting of Von der Linden, and the deception practised on the garrison may be classified. I got my leg of pork from Mynheer von der Linden, and never did mother handle her firstborn with truer affection than I did this dainty morsel; for pork, in any shape or form, we had scarcely tasted during the whole time we had been in Africa, and the gastronomic vision of the succulent morsels of young pig frizzling on a ramrod was quite epicurean. How very small a thing or event has decided the fate of nations, and how equally infinitesimal may be that which completely oversets the digestion! Returning from the house of Mynheer, I made a short cut, and looking into a water-hole close by, discovered a dead pig, who had evidently committed porcine suicide. It was no proof that the leg I held had been stilled by a similar accidental circumstance; but I could not disabuse my mind of a haunting suspicion of its possibility, and my appetite for pork grill fell away; and a couple of plover I had shot on the road served me instead of the feast I had previously prepared in imagination.

The next 'trekk' we missed the road, got on to some farm-tracks, which eventually landed us at a native kraal, the 'Baas' of which, an old Basuto of decidedly unprepossessing appearance, was the proprietor. A small 'soupje' of brandy secured his friendship; so we 'outspanned,' and annexed some of his cattle fence to make a fire, which was hardly well alight before we were joined by thirteen or fourteen more natives, whose inquiring

minds led them to the spot to discover the meaning of this unusual visitation. Maughan, who could speak some Kaffir language, chatted with the old 'Baas,' who, as spokesman for his friends around seemed rather disturbed in his mind at the altered state, of things the war had brought about. They put the Englishman and the Boer into their particular balance of estimation, and the latter was evidently found seriously wanting, for they said if the country changed hands they would 'trekk' to Basutoland, where their kindred were; and this was emphasized by a great many nods, shakes of the head, and a rattle of *rr*'s, a peculiarity of the Basuto language, which marks its contrast to the soft and musical Zulu tongue.

Our Cape brandy procured at Potcheffstroom received several severe shocks during the palaver, and the gullets of our Basuto acquaintances seemed never to tire of its repeated applications; the old 'Baas,' however, had the first taste of each one's allowance, reducing considerably the quantity intended for the lesser lights of his council. It stood him in good stead, however, and prevented his taking cold when an hour or two later we nearly succeeded in overturning the waggon and its contents in crossing a little river, the soft banks of which afforded most wretched foothold for oxen or vehicle. The old Basuto, without any vague regrets about injuring his wearing apparel, which was very limited, plunged with some of his followers into the river, and helped to support the back of the vehicle, which, to use a nautical term, was fast settling by the stern, while the others, our own

Kaffirs and ourselves, attached 'reims' to the top and front wheels, and held on like grim death above. The oxen from the Scotch cart were added to my team, and the united forces brought up the waggon from a position the most critical it had been in since the eventful morning it was almost submerged in the Buffalo River. We disgorged more brandy, thanked the old 'Baas' for his assistance, gave some silver to his followers, all of which he duly collected from them and put in his own pouch; and 'trekking' on, reached the main road in about half an hour's time.

We passed several large sheets of water, mostly brackish or salt, alive with wild-duck, which, however, were very shy and most difficult to get within range of a fowling-piece. We had once or twice to make our tea and coffee with this salt water, and the flavour will lingeringly haunt my outraged palate for all time. These were most exceptional cases, as fresh water was generally obtainable at the ordinary stages of ox-waggon 'trekk' distances.

We next passed through Bloemhof, the most interesting feature of which consisted of an original jeweller's shop, formed by a bell-tent and a Cape-cart, with a flourishing painted signboard hung in front to indicate the trade and name of the proprietor, whose very insecure-looking tenement seemed anything but burglar-proof, and whose chief protection no doubt consisted in the absence of metal sufficiently attractive to induce anyone to 'burgle.'

Beyond Bloemhof we had a remarkable *rencontre* with Boers, one of whom we subsequently discovered was

none other than the accredited murderer of the Scotsman Malcolm; and if physiognomy may be trusted, his face would have convicted him in the minds of a thousand juries. Certainly he looked his worst, having been terribly beaten in Kimberley a few days before, and with broken nose, battered face, and blackened eyes, he looked as unprepossessing a fragment of humanity as I ever beheld. He and his companions were excessively reticent and even sullen in manner, though one of them conversed freely, and the battered gentleman volunteered the information that he had been on 'Colley's Kop,' as the Boers called Amajuba Hill. I hazarded the pleasantry to one of our party who was holding converse with them that he must have come from there recently, a witticism that I have a strong opinion he fully understood, although spoken in English, for he scowled and looked more diabolical than before; and it did not come upon me by surprise to learn at a roadside canteen which we shortly after reached, that he was one S——t, the leader of the party who had looted the store at the Krokodil River, and the monument of whose handiwork was to be seen there in the heap of stones raised over 'Malcolm's Grave.'

We 'trekked' a good deal by moonlight, and shortened the distance slowly and surely between ourselves and the land of diamonds, our destination. The Vaal River, which is here a considerable stream, we crossed by means of a punt; and wet weather shortly after ensuing, we spent a day and a half 'outspanned' near a roadside store. The disappearance of Klaus and the oxen he

was in charge of, gave us rather a fillip, when the weather having cleared we prepared to move on again.

Klaus was found, however, sitting smoking dakka, or wild hemp, which was a constant habit of his, and the preparations for which were quite as remarkable as the results. He would fill his mouth with water, then draw in the smoke, blow, sputter, and cough with all the force of concentrated asthma, which performance was generally followed by a jargon of words apparently addressed to no person or thing in particular. The oxen, which we had concluded in our own minds the martial Klaus had 'jumped,' were browsing peaceably, and in half an hour were 'inspanned,' and soon left the roadside store far behind, its glittering iron roof twinkling in the sun, reminding us of those heliographic flashes we had come to know so well at Pretoria. At this store I met the only instance of actual rudeness deliberately offered by a Boer during our 'trekk' from Pretoria. They, as a rule, if not friendly, were never gratuitously rude; and at the worst were simply distant; but this individual, who was a Free State resident, and probably primed with what is called 'Dutch courage,' took the opportunity of my entering the store, where he and some three or four of his friends were enjoying themselves, to offer some evidently insulting observations in Cape Dutch, the nature of which I guessed at, though I did not fully understand them. Going to the door I whistled to my comrades of the road, who, headed by Fry, came trooping in to the canteen; and finding the forces equalized, I desired the 'Baas' of the store to acquaint his talkative Boer friend that any further

observations of his would be commented upon by my gently throwing him out of the door or the window, whichever was most convenient—a statement which reduced the animation of his conversational powers to a minimum; and after hastily shaking hands with everyone in the store, myself alone excepted, he left, muttering as he went that I must never attempt to 'outspan' on his farm, or the consequences would be serious in the extreme, which remarks we hailed with what is so beautifully described in parliamentary reports as 'ironical laughter.'

I am bound to add that the other Boers, his friends, who were present, entirely repudiated his remarks and behaviour, and a couple of them whom we subsequently met on the road, and had morning coffee with in the friendliest manner, we found most excellent fellows. One of them, who had served at Potcheffstroom against the British in the fort, was a very bright, smart fellow, and did not seem overjoyed at their own success, saying in a half-resigned manner that he supposed 'the reign of bluebacks would return,' an allusion to the paper currency in circulation under the former Boer Government, the value of which depreciated to an extraordinary extent, and became actually more or less fictitious.

On the morning of the twenty-fourth day from the date of our departure from Pretoria, we sighted Kimberley. It looked quite huge in proportion when compared with the little villages we had passed through on our way down; and the smoke of its engines, the big banks of *débris*, the hauling-gear, whose wheels stood

out in bold relief against the sky, the bustle of people, teams of oxen, and general hum and stir of business that was at once so perceptible, told us our primitive life was over, and it would soon be necessary to doff the transport rider's costume of slouch hat, breeches, and boots, for the more eminently respectable coat, trousers, and shoes of a higher civilization. Our journey had been pleasant enough, although a prolonged one, and I give it unhesitatingly as my opinion that physically I benefited more during the time it occupied than any other given four weeks of my previous existence.

CHAPTER X.

THE DIAMOND FIELDS TO QUEENSTOWN—AN EVENTFUL JOURNEY—AUCTIONEERING EXTRAORDINARY—EAST LONDON TO PORT ELIZABETH — COASTING TO THE CAPE — MOSSEL BAY — THE WESTERN PROVINCE—CAPE TOWN AGAIN—HOMEWARD BOUND.

THE fact of my being in Pretoria during the war, we found, was well known to the Kimberley people, who plied me with questions, and appeared as destitute of information as to what had taken place at the leaguered garrison towns of the Transvaal as the occupants thereof had been of a mining-share mania which had so absorbed the Diamond Fields population that they could scarcely spare a thought to the poor fellows who often stood knee-deep in the mud of Potcheffstroom fort and trenches, or lay under the nightly dews at Rustenburg and Marabastadt, or patrolled around Pretoria in fulfilment of their soldierly duty.

Whilst in Pretoria the subject was often mooted that the Diamond Fields people would form a mounted corps and relieve Potcheffstroom; but we little knew when the garrison of the latter place was in such dire straits as to demand sympathy and assistance from everyone who called himself a fellow-countryman, that a more attractive banner than old England's

Union Jack was being waved over the town of iron roofs and glittering stones, and that Mammon, in all the glory of variable scrip, was exacting a worship so absorbing as to exclude any other sentiment whatsoever. Such was the case; nor had the fever entirely abated by the time of our arrival, although the public pulse was beginning to beat more regularly, and we had no opportunity of seeing the streets filled with hatless, yelling brokers, buying and selling the scrip of newly-formed companies, as we were informed we might have done had we arrived a few weeks earlier.

Claims which had been held by individuals had been formed into limited liability companies, and such was the rush and influx of capital, principally from the South African Colonies, that these bits of ground attained an extraordinary, and in many if not most cases a fictitious, value. In one instance a company took over the claims of some fortunate diggers at a valuation of £25,000 per claim, for which the vendors, with truly innocent simplicity, accepted payment half in cash and the balance in scrip, receiving the enormous sum of £12,500 for each claim, and still retaining an equal amount of interest as shareholders of the company. It was the claimholder's opportunity, and he seized it, and it is probable that in the few short months the mining company mania was at its height, more fortunes were made than had ever been achieved by bringing to earth's surface the glittering gems that lay concealed in the mine beneath.

All this over-inflation was telling its tale, and the worthless ground of some, and the indifference of

directors and managers of other companies was surely and steadily 'tipping up the bucket,' to use a mining simile, and preparing the facile descent into the caverns of depreciation of all stock, good, bad, and indifferent, and aided by the efforts of the 'illicit diamond buyers,' converting the industry which had saved South Africa from previous ruin, into an agency for the general diffusion of bankruptcy amongst those who had honestly speculated, as well as others who held until too late to sell advantageously, and these included people in all parts of the country. The results of this over-inflation had not been fully developed, but sanguine Diamond Fields residenters held firmly to the opinion that the gale would be weathered, and the industry would 'come up smiling' in defiance of all the knock-down blows it received. One thing was certain, that a vast field for speculation opened up with every retrograde movement of the value of Diamond Scrip, and the 'knowing ones' were probably taking advantage of the situation for the time when the lowest point was touched, or the arrival of the big crash.

It was race-week when we arrived at Kimberley, and its hotel accommodation, never very extensive, was taxed to its utmost limits; so that after vainly trying to obtain that somewhat unknown luxury, a bed, a thing we had not extended in for a period of some five months' time, we returned to the iron-roofed temple of Thespis, and on the floor of one of its ante-rooms made ourselves as comfortable as we could with the waggon cushions and a few karosses of skins, a privileged method of spending the night we compulsorily enjoyed for the balance of

the week, until the devotees of the turf, who congregated for the Griqualand West Racing Carnival, packed up their betting-books, signboards, umbrellas and other insignia, and carried themselves, their hoarse profanity, and the general rakish atmosphere of dead knowledge and horsey blackguardism these worthies always seem to exhale, to other and more favoured parts of the colony.

The 'Show,' now somewhat rusty from a five months' rest, was re-introduced to the Diamond Fields, and met with a warm and kind reception, the 'battles, sieges, and fortunes' we had passed so recently through adding a heightened interest, and Kimberley with its mayor and corporation—the latter in all the panoply of swallow-tails, white chokers, and private boxes—crowded the theatre, and certainly gave the heartiest welcome that the applause of human hands, not to say feet and voices, especially those of the 'gods,' could possibly offer.

The long interregnum that had intervened, with all its curious train of incidents, events, *rôles*, and excitements, seemed to vanish and be at once forgotten before the spontaneity of the welcome of our Kimberley friends; and the feeling that I was once more 'at home' seemed the most striking one in the many that rapidly passed through my mind whilst acknowledging the kindly greeting of the 'Fields' people crowded into the elegant building of galvanized iron, on which they bestowed the gorgeous appellation of 'Theatre Royal.' Leaving my large waggon with the Good-child to sell for me, I bought five horses, and, in a weak moment, a two-wheeled Cape-cart belonging to the Knight of the

Hammer; and with four animals in the span, Fry tooling them along, myself in the saddle, and a very *civil* engineer and an equally uncivil printer for company, with our baggage compressed into the narrowest limits, we started on our journey down to the Cape—Queenstown in the Eastern Province our objective point.

Space will not permit me to recapitulate the various details of this, perhaps the most eventful, journey of my South African travelling; but borrowing the illustrative style of a prize-ring reporter, I will endeavour to epitomize a description of the battle of time against the road, in our endeavour to 'fly the country' and keep up to our advertised dates as appointed.

Round 1.—After a little sparring in the shape of rough and stony tracks between Kimberley and Jocobsdal, with the outskirts of the latter in view, the right wheel of cart came off—first knock-down blow for the road.

Round 2.—Up again smiling, and on to Fauresmith; wheel secured with a leather ring—ugly left-hander for the road. No performance at Fauresmith or Jagersfontein, in order to make up hours lost in repairs—good counter, for the road, against time. On to Bethulie; pleasant country to travel out of, during the winter, especially at night. Orange Free State; no hotels, but plenty of accommodation on the boundless 'Veld,' with a rime of frost half an inch thick for a blanket; horses and passengers' limbs frozen; one horse dead lame, left behind at Bethulie—good rally for the road. Six miles beyond Bethulie, cart capsized: result, dislocated tent-cover, smashed disselboom

(pole), barked shins, abrased noses—first blood for the road.

Round 3.—Fresh disselboom obtained; luxurious exercise of carrying same six miles, restive riding-horse objecting to assist in its conveyance; Cape cart rigged up afresh—time pulling itself together. Fresh 'trekk;' cold, rain, mud, slush, holes, rocks, stones, boulders, drifts—all in favour of the road. Other wheel off and passengers landed in nice soft mud—second knock-down blow for the road.

Round 4.—Wheel fixed up; more leather rings—nothing like leather for South African travel, except oxhide 'reims.' Forward! Twelve miles from Queenstown. Number one wheel, primary delinquent, sued for divorce; gained it, and off again. Dates knocked clean out of time by the road. Sponge exalted, and the road declared emphatically the conqueror—time nowhere.

The third disaster to our wheels had the effect of disturbing the otherwise fairly strong nerves of my travelling companion Fry, who declared in good set terms his intention to walk the balance of the journey, which he did.

Accompanied only by the printer, who was so lazy that I believe he would have declined to walk even to save his life—the civil engineer having parted our company at Fauresmith—I drove into Queenstown; the appearance of our Cape-cart scarcely justifying the magniloquent description of the local auctioneer, who I had instructed to announce its sale on my arrival.

We had done a fair share of 'roughing it' in our

'up country' travel, but prior to this, our last journey, had possessed a waggon which always afforded shelter, and in which a stretch could be obtained, and a fair amount of shelter secured from the cold night air, which in these higher altitudes was bitingly keen; but a two-wheeled Cape-cart was but a sorry substitute, and the gratifying feeling engendered by the possibility of the old ramshackle structure going to pieces as you drove, was not calculated to improve matters or add comfort to the mind.

I found the auctioneer had duly announced a 'splendid waggonette' and team of horses for auction, with the safe proviso that the sale would take place in the event of my arriving in time; and with a light and airy style, calculated to nervously shock the orthodox steady-going old-world type of his brethren of the hammer, he had added to his advertisement the statement that—

'Mr. Duval will give a bonus, too, commencing with a front tooth taken from the back part of Paul Kruger's head, and ending with a lock of Joubert's hair (six months' clip, fleece washed).'

A not very complimentary allusion to the Boer leaders, whom I had but a short time previously left behind in the Transvaal, and the latter of whom had come to be regarded by the Colonial Dutch as the 'George Washington' of South Africa.

The Colonial auctioneer is nothing if not a manufacturer of jokes, be they ever so good, bad, or middling. I sold my 'turn-out,' and felt somewhat abashed when the 'splendid waggonette' of the auction announce-

ment came on the scene in the shape of the Cape-cart ruins; and it seemed an action of charity on the part of the purchaser to take the interesting two-wheeled relic at any price whatsoever. I gave him a gentle hint as to the propriety of effecting a satisfactory life insurance, and the settling of his worldly affairs before attempting a journey in it; and have little doubts but that the amount of his policy has been paid over to his widow long before these lines see the light of day through the medium of printers' ink.

My stay at Queenstown was short; equally so my second visits to King Williamstown and East London, from which port I proceeded by the Union steam-ship *Danube* to Port Elizabeth. 'Grab,' the Russian Pole, I had left in Kimberley, where he preferred to remain to push his varied and eccentric fortunes; and at Port Elizabeth, Fry, who had been with me throughout my tour, and more or less connected with my 'show' for a period of nine years, elected to remain.

Accompanied by a young American named Albert Thies, a pianist of remarkable tact and musical skill, I left Port Elizabeth, and safely conveyed in the steam-ship *Arab*, arrived in Cape Town after a pleasant sea trip of a couple of days' duration.

Having re-appeared in Cape Town this time at the Mutual Hall, I gave, in response to a wish generally expressed, a couple of lectures on the Transvaal War, and found the pulse of the Cape people was not exactly at that fever heat on the subject of the late hostilities that might have been fairly imagined it would be.

Time, which succumbs occasionally to South African

roads, generally manages to come off fairly victorious on other occasions, and though but a few months had elapsed since the closing scenes of the Transvaal War were enacted, the Cape Town people were beginning to look upon it as history, to be relegated to the internal and to suffering editors—very often 'infernal' regions of Governmental Blue-books.

A fairly representative assemblage attended my first lecture, and a larger, though less demonstrative, one the second. Apropos of these war lectures, being invited to deliver one at a fashionable suburb of Cape Town, called Claremont, I arranged to do so. In order to heighten the interest of the 'spoken piece,' I had secured a number of transparencies from photographs of our camp and its principal scenes and incidents, taken by a Pretorian artist, Mr. H. F. Gros, and which, illuminated by a powerful oxy-hydrogen light, were very effective as illustrations.

When about to step on the platform at Claremont to commence my lecture, it was discovered that these transparencies had been forgotten, and there were no suitable trains by which a messenger could go for them and return in time.

'Go in,' said I to Thies, 'to Cape Town. Get a pony-carriage, or anything that you can find at the hotel in the village, and rattle away! I will keep on talking till you return.'

I had no written lecture, trusting to extemporaneous composition as I went along, and for an hour managed to keep my audience fairly interested; but as the minutes crept on, with no appearance of my messenger

and the fated transparencies, I began to fear my 'dissolving views' had dissolved entirely. I have seen men walk against time, and admit it is trying work; but from this particular experience, to talk against it is infinitely more so.

'Blucher or night' is said to have been Wellington's expressed thought at that most fateful of fields—historic Waterloo; but bad as the great General's position was, he still had an alternative. I, alas, had none; for the views, liberally announced and not forthcoming, might suggest a serious default, and the public having 'paid their money,' might insist on 'having their choice.'

I thrashed away at my subject, and fell back on selections of verses from the *News of the Camp*, which I thundered forth to the tuneful accompaniment of the nasal organ of a gallery auditor, who, having succumbed to an hour and three quarters' discourse, snored with a ten-nose power, which insisted on being heard despite all my efforts to rival Demosthenes or put Cicero out in the cold.

Two hours passed, and the hands of the clock were on the stroke of ten, when the joyful sight of my youthful American *confrère* appeared in the back of the hall, and in a moment later the lime-light was hissing and sputtering as the long looked-for 'transparencies' were 'projected' on to the canvas.

Having made a clean breast of the matter to the audience, I received from their hands an ample condonation of the offence of 'talking Transvaal,' as Thies used to call it, for the whole period of time allotted

for lecture and exhibition of views; and the 'sleeping beauty' in the gallery wakened up, and permitted his eyes to aid a personal enjoyment which a few moments before was entirely usurped by the organ most prominent between them.

A short visit to Mossel Bay, and a remarkable run through the western province to Worcester, *viâ* a number of Dutch-speaking towns, mostly all enshrouded in trees, generally beautifully situated, and veritable sleepy hollows in their characteristics, constituted the remainder of my Cape experiences. If any of the Rip Van Winkles of these western province towns awaken to-day from their twenty years' slumber, I fancy their surprise will not be of the striking character of Washington Irving's hero; nor will the exclamation of 'Rip' of Jefferson's creation, that his native place was 'twice as bigger as it was,' apply to the little, quiet, dreamy towns of Swellendam, Heidelberg, Riversdale, or Stellenbosch, which dot at intervals the country lying between Mossel Bay and the Cape of Good Hope. At Worcester we reached the railway, having driven from Mossel Bay, appearing in six different towns during the week's travel, each averaging a distance of from seven to eight hours one from the other; and leaving Worcester at midnight by the mail train, which a fatherly directorate had thoughtfully supplied with sleeping hammocks, we reached Cape Town the following morning, and breakfasted at the Criterion Hotel, just as the pious residents were beginning to don their Sunday garments to attend early morning service in their various houses of

prayer. This feat of visiting and appearing in six towns unconnected by railway, with long distances between them, in the same number of consecutive days, I am free to think was never before attempted, and of a certainty, never accomplished by any purveyor of amusement travelling 'with a show through Southern Africa,' and bearing in my recollection the physical strain it involved, I may safely add will never be undertaken again by me, be the inducements ever so great or the reward ever so pecuniarily remunerative. Nothing remained but to arrange my return to England, and securing a berth on board the magnificent steamship *Trojan*, I said my farewells; and accompanied by one of the kindest friends I have ever met, I stepped on board, and took a last survey of the grand surroundings of Table Bay. 'Good-bye, old fellow. God bless you and yours,' accompanied by that emphatic pressure of the hand which means much when honestly given by man to man, were expressions to be heard on every side, good wishes and kind words exchanged, as the grand ship moved slowly out of the dock. In a few minutes the shore was sinking in the distance darkened by a heavy shower of rain, which was driving away the gathered crowd of handkerchiefs-waving, cheering friends who had assembled to see the last of us. With many attractions to lure me away, I felt a trace of sadness in bidding farewell to a country where I had met many genuine friends, enjoyed the best of health, and where the remembrance of some of my roughest experiences were not unpleasant, and afforded recollections calculated to

return in the future as vivid pictures of the past, providing food for the mind, and amplifying and enlarging ideas on men and things, which I take to be a source of benefit to any one whose career may bring him into personal contact with others of his species 'all the world around.'

THE END.

BILLING AND SONS, PRINTERS AND ELECTROTYPERS, GUILDFORD.

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